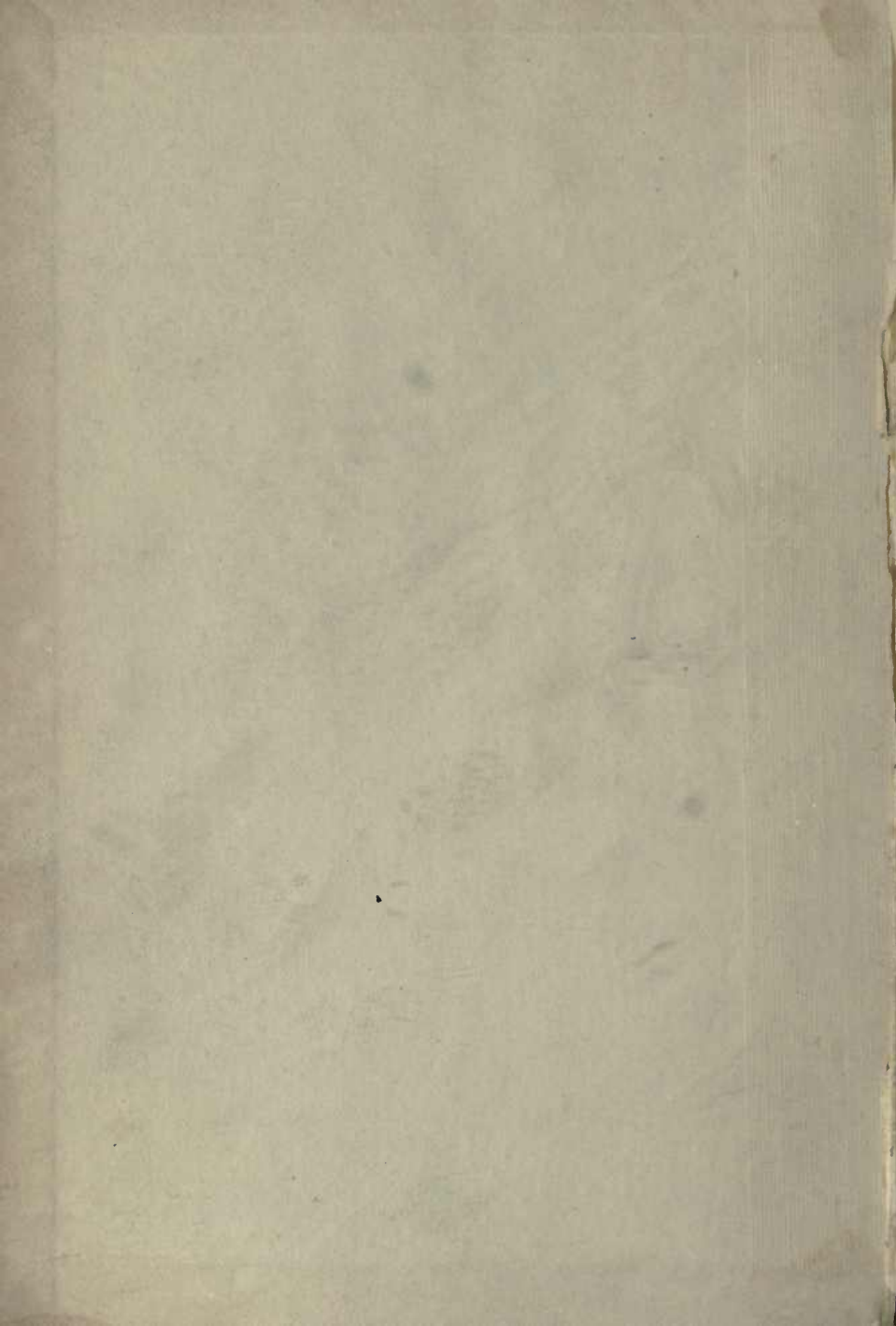


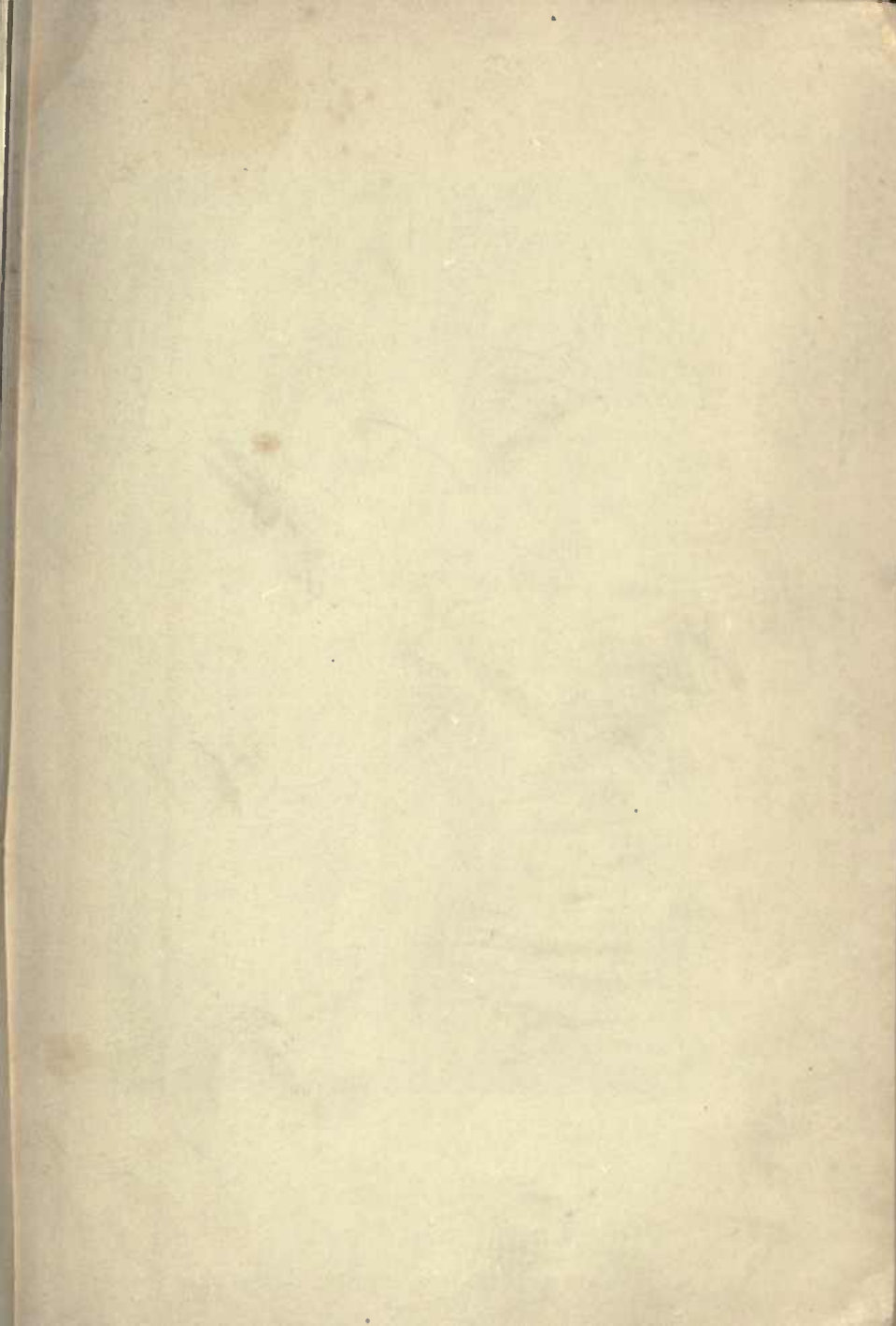
PRINCESS SUKEY



By

MARSHALL SAUNDERS







PRINCESS SUKEY.

W. E. 524747

Princess Sukey

THE STORY OF A PIGEON
AND HER HUMAN FRIENDS

By
MARSHALL SAUNDERS

*"Despite neither cats, birds, dogs, nor any member of the animal kingdom,
for are not all created beings little brothers of the
earth, the air, and the sea?"*



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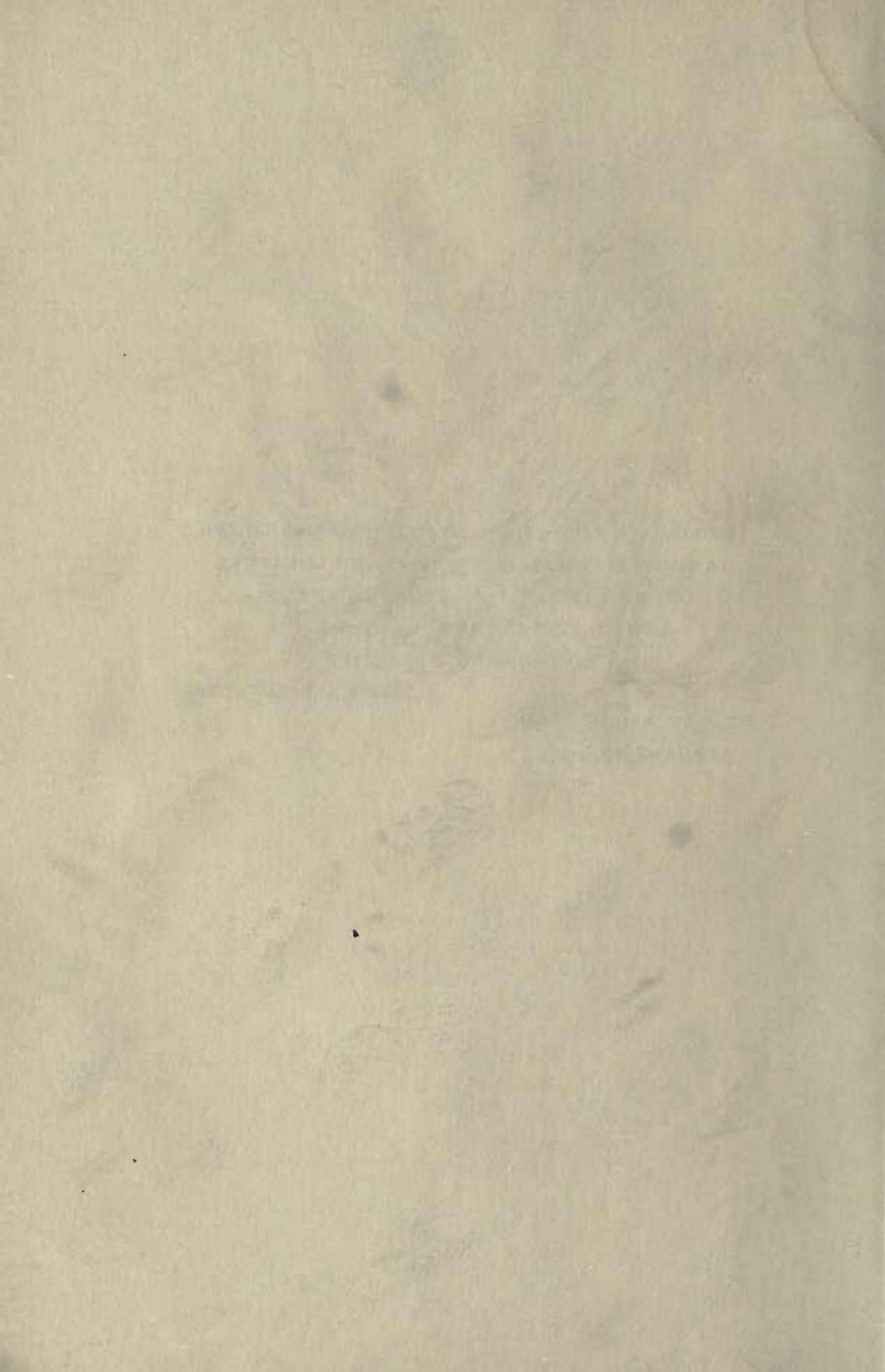
1905
Eaton & Mains

I DEDICATE THIS STORY TO ONE WHO HAS SHOWN
A KIND INTEREST IN EVERY LIVING CREATURE
ON MY FARM—TO MY DEAR BROTHER-IN-
LAW, CLARENCE KING MOORE, OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

MARSHALL SAUNDERS

MEADOW BROOK FARM

JANUARY 26, 1905



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PRINCESS SUKEY

CHAPTER I

THE PIGEON PRINCESS

DEAR little Princess Sukey sitting by the fire—pretty little pigeon—of what is she thinking as she dreamily eyes the blazing wood? If a pigeon could review its past life, what she has of bird mind would be running back over the series of adventures that she had ere she established herself in this well ordered household.

Has she any mentality of her own, or are all pigeons stupid as has been said? Listen to her story, and judge for yourself.

To begin with—she is not a common street pigeon like those who are looking in the window, and who are probably envying her the silk cushion on which she sits, her china bath, her lump of rock salt, and her box of seeds. For it is a bitterly cold day. The wind is blowing fiercely, the thermometer is away below zero, and the ground is covered with snow. In summer these same street pigeons seem to be laughing at the pigeon princess on account of the ab-

normal life that she leads, but just now they certainly would change places with her.

The princess is a Jacobin—a thoroughbred, with a handsome hood that nearly hides her head, a fine mane and chain, and her colors are red and white.

Her parents were beauties—show birds with perfect points, and they were owned by a young pigeon fancier of the small city of Riverport, Maine.

The lad's name was Charlie Brown, and he had a friend called Titus Sancroft, or, more familiarly, "Stuttering Tite," from an unfortunate habit that he had formed of catching his breath at the beginning of nearly every sentence he uttered.

Now, young Titus walked most opportunely into Charlie's pigeon loft just a day after Princess Sukey had been hatched.

Just before he came in the clock struck four. A male pigeon always helps the female in the work of incubation, and bringing up the young ones. About ten o'clock every morning the mother pigeon leaves her eggs, goes to get something to eat, and walks about the loft with the other pigeons—a pigeon rarely plays; even young ones are phlegmatic. As she comes off her nest the male pigeon goes on and sits there till four in the afternoon. Then the female returns for the night.

Well, the young princess was a sickly pigeon. There had been two sickly pigeons, for usually two eggs are laid at a time. One had died, and the father Jacobin, thinking that the young Sukey was also going to die, took her in his beak, lifted her from the nest, and gently deposited her on the floor at the other end of the loft.

There is little sentiment among birds. They believe in the survival of the fittest, and the weak are calmly taken from the nest.

The young pigeon was not desperately ill. However, blind and naked as she was, she could not have survived long, away from the warmth of the nest, unless this boy Titus had discovered her.

"H-h-hello, Charlie," he stuttered, "here's a squab out of the nest." Charlie took the bird by the legs.

"W-w-what are you going to do?" asked Titus.

"Strike its head against the wall."

Titus did not approve of this.

"Wh-why don't you put it back in the nest?" he asked, excitedly.

"No good—once the old ones put it out they won't look at it."

"C-c-can't you feed it?"

"Too much trouble. I did have some birds that would feed young ones—two fine old feeders, but I sold them."

Titus had a mercenary little soul. "A-a pity to throw away good money," he said, looking at the pigeon. "I-I should think you could worry some food down its throat yourself."

"I could, but it's an awful bother. I've tried it. This is a sick thing anyway. It will be dead in five minutes. See how it's gasping."

"B-b-bet you my jackknife it won't die," replied Titus.

So they waited five minutes, and, as good fortune would have it, the future princess gasped them out, and Charlie laid her in Titus's palm. "The squab is yours."

"B-b-blest if I know what to do with it," remarked Titus, turning the pigeon over in his hands.

Charlie smiled mischievously. "I guess your grandfather will give you a time if he finds out."

"H-h-he shan't find out," said Titus.

"It's mean that you can't have pigeons or something," observed Charlie. "All the fellows have. Why don't you make tracks for another grandfather?"

Titus grinned. His grandfather was a great trial to him, but it was only in one respect. In other ways he was a model grandfather.

"Hope it will live," said Charlie, generously. "Tuck some food down its throat—some feed one way, some another—and mix some sweet oil in it. I've heard that's good when you take them from the parents."

Titus stood a minute longer; then seeing that the pigeon was near her end, and that Charlie was unconcernedly going on with his work of feeding and watering the other pigeons, he scampered home.

Titus lived with his grandfather, Judge Sancroft, and Judge Sancroft possessed a somewhat foolish and provoking but most devoted old family servant man called Higby.

Titus ran all about the house looking for this man. He was really forbidden to talk to him unless he was positively forced to do so. The Judge had commanded that Titus should only request a service from Higby, and thank him for one rendered. There was to be no conversation, for old Higby stammered terribly, and the Judge feared that it was from him Titus had caught the tiresome habit.

Finally the boy found the man in the attic superintending some painters.

"S-s-see what I've got, Higby," he said, opening his palms, where he was keeping the pigeon warm.

"A s-s-squab," said Higby, "a-a-and and an ugly w-w-worm of a thing it is."

"W-w-what shall I do with it?" asked Titus.

"W-w-wring it's neck, young sir," said Higby, who was much worried by the painters. "'Tis a s-s-sad world for m-m-man, woman, or pigeon."

"B-but it's worth money," said Titus. "It's a Jacobin—the parents cost twenty dollars."

Higby looked at it again. Neither he nor the lad was much animated by sentiment in saving the life of a bird. Then he felt the pigeon's crop.

"Th-th-there ain't nothin' in there, Master Titus. You've got to fe-fe-feed it mighty quick."

"Y-you come help me," said the boy.

"I ca-ca-can't leave these workmen."

"I-if you don't," replied Titus, "I'll tell my grandfather that you seek me out and talk to me. Then he'll discharge you."

Higby flew into a rage. As he choked and spluttered and stammered he stepped backward. That was his way when wrestling for words, and when he at last got his words he struck one foot sharply on the floor.

Young Titus, on the contrary, always stopped stuttering when he became deeply moved about anything, but in his excitement he had formed the habit of stepping forward. So if he were talking to Higby there was at the same time advance and retreat.

The painters were nearly killing themselves laughing, and when Higby discovered this he shuffled downstairs after the boy.

Titus led the way to the kitchen. "Mrs. Blodgett," he called to the housekeeper, who was directing the maids, "please make me some warm feed for this pigeon."

The housekeeper stared at the bird. "O, law! what a nasty little thing!"

By this time the future little princess was nearly dead, and Titus in dismay called, "Hurry up."

"Master Titus," she replied, snappishly, "the girls are preparing dinner. You'll have to wait."

"I can't wait," returned the boy, angrily, and he began to step forward. "Don't you see the bird's dying? Higby, you talk to her."

Titus's eyes were flaming, and Higby, who was at heart a coward, and terrified of anyone in a real rage, subdued his own disturbed feelings, and in a wheedling voice asked Mrs. Blodgett for just a little "ro-ro-rolled oats," with boiling water poured on.

Mrs. Blodgett frowned, and grumbled out something about having men and boys in the kitchen at mealtimes. However, she drew out her keys and went to the storeroom, and in a few minutes Titus and Higby were in a corner of the kitchen with a cup of soft food before them, but with nothing but their clumsy fingers to put it in the pigeon's small beak.

The young bird smelt and felt the food, and nearly wriggled out of Titus's grasp in trying to get it.

"T-t-this won't do," exclaimed the boy, when she

jabbed her beak against his hand, "w-w-we've got to have a feather or a stick."

Mrs. Blodgett gave them some turkey feathers and some toothpicks, and between them they managed to worry a little food into the pigeon's beak.

"You ought to h-h-have a syringe," said Higby, "the old birds fe-fe-feed their young ones by putting their b-b-beaks crosswise in their mouths to pu-pu-pump the food down."

"I-I know, I've seen them," replied Titus. "You just run along to the drug store and get me one."

Higby had to go, and by putting a rubber tube in the pigeon's beak they managed to feed her pretty well.

When her crop was quite round and full Titus called for a basket and cotton wool, and put her behind the kitchen stove.

"That basket is mortally in the way," said Mrs. Blodgett, fretfully; "it is just in the place where we put our plates to warm."

"B-b-blodgieblossom," said the boy, cajolingly, thrusting his arm through hers, "it's for your boy."

The housekeeper gave in. When young Titus called her "Blodgieblossom," and said he was her boy, she would do anything for him.

"Mind, don't any of you knock that basket over," she said, turning frowningly to the maids.

Titus was running upstairs, when suddenly he stopped and hurried back. They all thought he had come to thank them for helping him, but he had not.

"L-l-look a-here!" he said, sternly, "If I catch any of you prattling to grandfather that I've got a pigeon I'll make it hot for you."

They all grinned at each other. The Judge was a good man, but he was rather severe with his grandson when he deceived him.

The Judge did not find out. He never entered the kitchen, and the young pigeon grew and thrived, but not behind the stove on the plate-warmer, for Titus, finding that her little body was almost like a furnace itself, appropriated a corner of one of the big kitchen tables for her basket.

Young Titus and old Higby fed her several times a day. One had to hold her, while the other pushed the food down her throat, and cross enough the old servant man was when Titus would call out, "T-t-the goose hangs high."

Titus did not dare to say, "It is feeding time for the pigeon, Higby," for the Judge might have heard, and Titus feared that he would be exceedingly annoyed if he found out that a bird was being kept in his house.

It was really curious that such a dislike for the lower creation should have been imputed to a really benevolent and kind-hearted man like Judge San-croft. True, he did not care particularly for animals. He had been brought up in a city, and he had never had any animals about him but horses and cows. He was not actively fond of them, but he always saw that they were well cared for. None of his children had been fond of animals. Certainly he was not the kind of man to have said, "No," if any of his young sons or daughters had come to him years ago and said, "Father, I want a dog or a cat."

However, his own children were all dead, and the

opinion had strengthened with years that the Judge did not care for dumb creatures. Titus did not know that his grandfather would have listened with dismay to anyone who said to him, "Sir, you have a young grandson under your roof who is pining for pets such as other boys have, and he is afraid to ask you for them."

The Judge was unmistakably a very good man. His white head, large, handsome face, and portly frame bore the marks of good temper, sound judgment, and eminent respectability. It was rather a wonder that he had not made himself known as a philanthropist. However, he had in early life been devoted to his profession, then he had had much trouble and bereavement, and had traveled extensively, and then his health had partly broken down, and he had resigned his judgeship, given up most of the active duties of life, and settled down to a sedentary old age.

But old age did not come. Renewed health did come, and at the time when our story opens the somewhat bewildered Judge found himself in the position of a man who sees the map of his life turned upside down in his hands.

He really had not enough to do. He had made enough money to live on, really more than enough, but he began to think seriously of opening that long-closed law office. He was only restrained by a question of dignity. He had been so long on the bench that he would hate to come down to office work again—and yet he could not rust out. He sighed sometimes as he thought of his future—sighed, not knowing what responsibilities Provi-

dence was preparing for him. Probably if he could have foreseen he would have sighed more heavily. However, the responsibilities brought also their alleviations with them.

Young Titus was not at all like his grandfather in appearance. The Judge was a large, rotund, handsome man, always carefully, even exquisitely, dressed. Titus was slim and dark, loose-jointed and always awry. His collar was shady, his clothes tumbled. He was not in one single outward respect like the dignified white-haired man who sat opposite him at the table. But there was the mysterious tie of blood between them. Apparently the elderly man and the boy were not at all alike, but there were points of resemblance. They both felt them, and in their way were devoted to each other.

The Judge was a much-afflicted man. Wife, sons, daughters, all were gone, but this one lad, and he often looked at him wistfully. If anything should happen to this sole grandchild the good old name of Sancroft would die out.

A day came when it looked as if the family name would go. A terrible thing happened to young Titus, and his grandfather's house was wrapped in gloom. The lad's unfortunate habit of stuttering was at the root of the trouble.

The Judge knew perfectly well that any physical or mental peculiarity about a boy subjects him to an intermittent martyrdom from his fellow boys, who with respect to teasing are part savages. Therefore he had a private teacher who wrestled with Titus on the subject of stuttering for several hours a week. He also was willing that Titus should have all his

lessons at home, but this the boy would not agree to, and the Judge respected him for it.

Titus always went down the street with his eyes rolling about him. It was such an irresistible temptation to the boys to imitate him that usually the air was vocal with mocking birds.

Fortunately, Titus was exceedingly wiry, and utterly fearless. Otherwise he would certainly have been cowed or injured long before our story begins.

He always marched out of school with the other boys, never waited to walk home in the shadow of a teacher, and if a call of derision reached him and he could locate the boy, if he had time, he took off his coat, intrusted it to a friend, and rushed into the fray. The boys in his set never carried books in the street. They had duplicate copies at home.

On one particular day, which turned out to be the disastrous day for poor Titus, he had got halfway home with, strange to say, not a single fight.

It was not a school day but a holiday, and he had been downtown with a companion. Suddenly, as he strolled along beside him, a teasing voice rang out:

Stuttering Tite, stuttering Tite,

O, he is a daisy!

Give him time and give him words,

And he'll make you crazy.

“An S and an S, and a T and a T,

And a stam and a stutter, and don't you see—”

The boy got no further. His song was so malicious, his manner so exquisitely provoking, that young Titus, without waiting for a single preliminary, flew upon him like a whirlwind.

Provoker and the provoked one rolled over and over in the middle of the street. It was a rainy, muddy morning in the late summer, and in their dark suits and bedaubed condition they soon had very much the appearance of two dogs.

So thought a young man who was driving a fast horse and talking to a lively young girl by his side. One careless glance he gave the supposed dogs; then, thinking that they would get out of the way, he scarcely took pains to avoid them.

Needless to say, the dogs made no effort to avoid him. On the contrary, they rolled right in his path. One terrified shriek he heard from Titus's opponent, then there was silence.

The horrified young man sprang from his buggy. One boy was not hurt, he was only frightened. The other lay with his dark young face turned up to the sky. There was blood on his hands and his forehead. The horse's hoofs had struck him, and the wheels of the buggy had gone over his legs.

The young man did not lose his head. He asked the uninjured lad for Titus's name and address, he put him in the buggy, and requesting a bystander to notify the Judge he drove rapidly to a hospital, his girl friend tenderly holding Titus's injured head.

The succession of troubles that Judge Sancroft had had during his life had all been of a deliberate kind. His wife and children had all had long illnesses, and much suffering, so much so that death had come as a welcome release. He did not remember anything just as sudden as this, and his chastened and subdued heart died within him. He feared that he was going to lose his last treasure.

He happened to be in his club when the news came to him, and taking a carriage he drove at once to the hospital.

What a contrast—from the quiet-luxurious rooms of the club, from the peaceful reading or talking men, to this abode of pain and distress.

The Judge reverently bared his head as he entered the door. "God pity them!" he murmured, as he walked through the long halls and corridors to the private room where his young grandson had been carried.

There was a white-capped nurse in the room. The Judge bowed courteously to her, then he turned to the bed.

Was that Titus—was that his lively, mischievous grandson—that pale, quiet lad with the bandaged head?

The Judge stretched out both hands and laid them on the lad's wrists.

"My boy," he said, piteously, "my boy, don't you know me?"

"He is quite unconscious, sir," said the nurse.

"Will he die?" asked the Judge.

"Sir," she said, protestingly, "the operation has not taken place—only an examination."

The Judge sat down by the bed. Bitter, rebellious thoughts, resigned thoughts, protesting thoughts, chased each other through his mind.

At last he got up and went to the back of the room. "God's will be done," he said, with a great sigh.

The nurse gazed surreptitiously at him. She was very young, and to her the Judge in his vigorous

late middle age, and with his white head, appeared to be an old man.

"And a good one," she said to herself. Then she listened.

The Judge was also listening. His senses were unnaturally acute. Before her he heard the soft footfalls and the whispering at the door. The hospital attendants had come to take his boy to the operating room.

"I shall wait here," he said, and with a piteous face he watched the lifting and taking away of the quiet little body. But when the door closed he went on his knees by the bed.

"O, Lord, spare my boy—take my life if necessary, but spare his. I am getting old, but he is young. Spare him, spare him, dear Lord!"

CHAPTER II

MRS. BLODGETT'S OPINION

WHAT was becoming of the poor princess all this time, for that station in life had been assigned her as soon as the delighted Titus noted her aristocratic manners.

She was now a lively bird of three weeks of age, and though, according to well bred pigeon ways, she had not yet left her nest she was always looking about, and quite well aware of what took place around her.

The accident to young Titus had occurred about noon, when he was on his way home for lunch. It was now seven o'clock in the evening, and Princess Sukey was inquiringly raising her pretty hooded head from her basket to stare about her.

Higby and the maids were serving the dinner. Mrs. Blodgett had had a dreadful fit of hysterics when she heard what had happened to the boy of the household, and had disappeared, no one knew where.

Higby was whispering the news. The Judge had stayed at the hospital till dinner time. The doctors said that there was just a bare chance of Master Titus's life, but they were afraid of his reason. There had been injury to the brain.

"It's powerful sa-sa-sad to see the old man," he went on.

Higby was much older than the Judge, but still he always called him "the old man."

"He sits and ea-ea-eats," he stammered.

"Surely," said the young rosy-faced cook, "he aint eatin' with the boy 'most dyin'."

"Did I s-s-say he was?" retorted Higby. "He's p-p-playin' with his food just like a ca-ca-cat with a mouse, only he ain't goin' to e-e-eat it."

"He feels bad inside," said the parlor maid sympathetically. "I know the feelin'—kind of sick like. I had it when I lost my little brother. Not a bite of food passed my lips for two days. What's the matter with that pigeon?"

The unfortunate little princess was nearly starved. Her crop was quite empty, and she was experiencing some of the torment that the healthy young of any kind suffer from acute hunger. Titus always fed her at noon, and it was now night. Imperiously agitating her long red and white wings, she made the whistling noise which a young pigeon strives to attract the attention of its parents.

"Hush, gor-gor-gormandizer," said Higby, turning fiercely on her. "Is this a time for st-st-stuffing when y-young master is nearly dead?"

The pigeon understood nothing of what he said about the boy, but she clearly saw that no food would be forthcoming now, so she uttered a complaining "Wee! wee!" and squatted down in her basket.

As she did so the kitchen door leading into the back hall was thrown violently open and Mrs. Blodgett walked in.

She was a short, stout, middle-aged woman, with

red cheeks and a skin that looked as if it were too tight for her fat body. Her clothes, too, were tight, giving her generally an uncomfortable appearance. The expression of her face was often fretful. However, she was on the whole a good sort of woman.

Just now she was greatly excited. She untied her bonnet strings, flung them back, and said in a loud voice, "I've seen him."

"S-s-seen who?" asked Higby, stopping short with a tray in his hands.

"The boy. Where's the Judge?"

"Master T-t-titus!" exclaimed Higby, walking backward and striking his foot.

"Yes—hush—I'll tell you later. Give me that pigeon."

Before anyone could reach the princess Mrs. Blodgett had snatched the basket from one of the kitchen tables, and was walking toward the stairway leading to the upper part of the house.

Suddenly she turned back. "Where's the Judge?"

Higby stared at her. Then he said, "I-i-in his study—he ordered co-co-coffee there. You're not going to s-s-see him?"

"Why aint I?" she asked, irritably. "Why aint I?"

"I d-d-don't know," stammered Higby. "Only you don't generally call on him this time of day."

"Lead the way," she said, grandly. "Step out."

Higby stumbled up the steps before her, the dishes rattling as he went. When he opened the study door Mrs. Blodgett walked in after him.

The Judge was standing before the fireplace in

a melancholy attitude, with his hands behind his back.

He looked at Mrs. Blodgett as she came in, but did not seem surprised. His servants often came to him with their troubles.

"Well, Mrs. Blodgett," he said, patiently, when Higby poured out his cup of coffee and handed it to him.

"I've somewhat to say to you, sir," she replied, with a toss of her head.

The Judge looked at Higby, who went into the hall, closing the door reluctantly behind him.

Mrs. Blodgett was struggling with a variety of emotions. At last she burst out with a remark, "I've seen the boy, sir!"

"Have you?" said the Judge, eagerly, and turning he put his coffee cup on the mantelpiece, as if glad of an excuse to be rid of it.

"Yes, sir, I've seen the boy, and he spoke to me."

"He spoke!" exclaimed the Judge, "but, Mrs. Blodgett, what does this mean? No one was to be admitted."

Mrs. Blodgett smiled. She knew that the Judge was too just to condemn her without a hearing.

"It was this way, sir," she said, gently putting the pigeon's basket down on the table, and taking a handkerchief from her pocket to mop her flushed face. "It was this way," and as she spoke she felt herself getting calm. There was a peaceful, judicial atmosphere in the Judge's study, and about the man himself there was something genial and soothing. "When I heard of that boy's head run over and smashed, the heart stood still in my body. Now, if

it had been you, sir, or me, or Higby—but that only bit of young life about the house—it did seem too awful. 'I'm goin' to see him,' said I. 'I'm goin' to see him afore he dies.' Bells were ringin' in my ears, an' my head was in a kind of fog like a ship at sea, but I crawled out to the street, I walked to the hospital. Many's the hour I paced up and down waitin' for you to come out, for I knew you'd stop me if you saw me. When you was out of sight I hurried to the door—I rung the bell."

The Judge drew a long breath, and leaned his head slightly forward in the intensity of his interest.

"'Could I see the bed where Master Titus lay?' I asked," continued Mrs. Blodgett. "No, I couldn't. I was prepared for that. But can you stop a woman when she makes up her mind? No, sir. I sat in the waitin' room an' I cried for a solid hour, and then they said I might look in the room for one minute, if I'd promise not to speak above my breath.

"I promised, and I meant to keep it, but I didn't. When I walked into that quiet room, when I looked at him lyin' so still with them white cloths on his black head, then, may heaven forgive me, sir, I let a screech of 'Master Titus, me darlin'!

"He opened them impish eyes, sir, he give me a glance. 'Blodgieblossom,' says he, 'feed the pigeon, an' tell grandfather.'

"He spoke, an' he went to sleep again, an' I was hustled out into the hall, an' my! didn't them nurses give me a tongue-lashin'! But I had heard my boy speak, sir; his mind were there."

The Judge's face was disturbed and bewildered.

Mrs. Blodgett was hurrying on, though she kept a keen eye on him.

"So, sir, I says to myself, 'Go right home, tell the Judge what the boy says. Tell him that if the Lord in his mercy spared an innocent bird when it was tumbled out of its nest, maybe he will spare a helpless boy.'"

The Judge's face was radiant. "Then there is a pigeon?"

"Indeed there be, sir," she said, pulling at the princess, who, perceiving herself in a new environment, had crouched down in her basket. "Your young grandson's pet pigeon, hid for fear of you—O, sir, 'tis sad to see him cravin' dogs an' cats, an' havin' only this senseless fowl!"

This was an unkind slap at the princess, who, however, took it good-naturedly, but the Judge looked sharply at Mrs. Blodgett.

"Sir," she said, in an earnest voice, "I've been thinkin' of the many years I've served you. You've been a good, kind master to me, bearin' with my faults an' my temper, an', sir, when I heard of the boy's mishap I blamed myself for somethin' I've often thought of doin', but have never done."

The Judge made no remark, but his round, full, honest eyes were bent on her intently as she went on.

"You couldn't get me to leave your employ, sir, not unless you chased me out. There aint a servant ever comes in this house that leaves on account of you. It's me, or Higby. An', sir, likin' an' honorin' you, I can't help takin' an interest in your grandson. There's a soft spot in him, spite of his provokin'

ways, an' many's the time I've shed a tear over his motherless head. I, bein' as it were the only woman in the house—them senseless, gigglin' girls, an' you an' that poor foolish creature Higby, not countin'. An' takin' an interest, I've often thought that boys bein' naturally fond of live stock, it's a pity you don't let Master Titus have some to potter over. If he had he'd hurry home from school like Charlie Brown, an' not spend so much time in loiterin' around the streets an' pickin' up quarrels."

The Judge contracted his eyebrows.

"Sir," said the woman, solemnly, "if I'd come to you long ago an' said, 'Your young grandson just craves the pets the other boys have,' you'd have got him some."

"Mrs. Blodgett," said the Judge, kindly, "let the past alone."

"But, sir, you'd have done it," she said, tearfully. "You're that kind of a man. Young Master Titus has always hid that set of feelin's from you. He pretended he didn't want a pony or a dog. He wanted to please you. An', sir, the fear of the extra clutter of work was what kep' my mouth shut. Says I, 'If he has rabbits and fowls I'll have more work to do.' An' when I heard of what happened this holiday mornin', when there was no school to take him out, an' when he naterally would 'a' been with pets if he had had 'em, I said, 'The Lord has punished me!'"

She was sobbing bitterly now, and the Judge felt his own eyes growing moist.

"Mrs. Blodgett," he said, slowly, "we all make mistakes. With shame and contrition I acknowl-

edge that my life has been full of them. But tears do not blot out errors. Turn your back on past faults, and go forward in the new path you have marked out. Do not waste strength in lamentations. I see that I have done wrong not to find out a natural, wholesome instinct in my grandson. If the Lord spares him we shall see a different order of things. Let us say we have done wrong—we will do better in future.”

The woman looked up in a kind of awe. She was only of medium height. The Judge stood far above her. He had straightened himself as if to take new courage. His tall form seemed taller, his eyes were fixed on vacancy. And this grand, good man, without forgetting or laying aside his dignity, had before her, a humble servant, clothed himself with humility. He had done wrong, he said.

“Sir,” she replied, with her woman’s mind rapidly darting to a new subject, “I’ve heard say that once the biggest lawyer, the chief of all the lawyers in the Union—”

She hesitated, and bringing back his gaze to her the Judge said, kindly, “The chief justice of the Supreme Court?”

“Yes, sir, I’ve heard say that he got stuck, and he asked your opinion. Is that so?”

“Not exactly, Mrs. Blodgett,” he said, smiling slightly and shaking his head, “not exactly, but—”

He looked at a clock on the wall. He was in trouble, and wished to be alone, but, like the courteous gentleman he was, did not care to dismiss her.

However, she understood him. “I ask your pardon, sir,” she said, humbly, “for takin’ up so much

of your valuable time, but I was in sore straits about this pigeon."

"Ah! that is the bird, is it?" asked the Judge, stepping forward.

The princess rose up in her beauty. That kind face leaning over her meat food, and shaking her wings she uttered a pitiful "Wee! wee!"

Mrs. Blodgett was anxiously watching the Judge.

"I take it, sir, as how the lad is thinkin' of it in his deliriumtries. He wants you to know about it, an' have it looked after. The unthinkin' creature has been brought up near the kitchen range, but now that precious lamb is worryin' about it I don't dare to leave it there. Suppose the girls should spill gravy on it!"

All this talk was very fine, but in the meantime the princess was dying of hunger, so in her distress she did what she had never done before. Leaning over the edge of her basket, she raised one coral claw, held on, scrambled, then hopped out, and trotted over the writing table toward the Judge.

"She's hungry, sir," said Mrs. Blodgett. "If you like, sir, I'll bring her food here."

The Judge was looking at Sukey with a most peculiar expression. He knew nothing about birds. How many things he had dipped into apart from his profession, but never once had he ever felt the slightest curiosity with regard to the lower creation. Birds and animals existed, but he did not care to know anything about them. Now, as he looked at the pigeon in the light of his grandson's interest, a series of thoughts flashed into his mind. The creature had the breath of life in its nostrils just as he

had, it was hungry, it could make its wants known. How many other points of resemblance to human beings had it?

"Why is it doing that?" he asked, when the pretty hooded head was thrust into his hand, and the pink beak tapped his fingers.

"It's food, sir, she's after. Shall I ring for Higby to bring some?"

The Judge was just about to say, "Take it away," when he reflected that it was Titus's bird, and stretching out a hand he rang the bell by the fireplace.

Higby came hurrying into the room with a precipitation that told he had not been far away.

"Pigeon food, Higby," said Mrs. Blodgett, grandly; "some warm water to drink, and all Master Titus's syringes and things for feedin' the fowl."

Higby disappeared at the wave of her hand, and presently came back with a box full of things.

"Here," said Mrs. Blodgett, clearing a place on the Judge's writing table, "here."

Higby put down the things, then he stared at her.

"Take the pigeon," she said, "hold it in your hands. I'll fix the food."

Higby, in surprise, did as she told him, and the Judge, silently standing beside them, watched with interest.

"Let's see," said Mrs. Blodgett, turning over the things in the box, "there's nothin' mixed. We'll give her millet seed, sand, scraped cuttlefish, and soaked bread. I'll mix it," and, pouring the various ingredients in a cup, she stirred them as briskly as if she were making a pudding.

Higby was amazed. He did not suppose that Mrs. Blodgett knew anything about the pigeon, but she was pretty shrewd, and had always kept one eye on him and the boy as they took care of the princess.

"No, I don't want that syringe," she said, pushing it away when Higby offered it to her. "To my mind, this bird is too big for soft food. I'll make it pills," and she rolled the bread and seed together. "Now for a feedin' stick," she said, looking around. "I can't push the food down that small throat with my fingers."

Turning her head to and fro, she espied a slender silver penholder on the writing table. Catching it up, she tore a strip from her handkerchief, wound it round the tapering end of the penholder, and pushed the pill into the princess's beak.

"That pill sticks," she said, briskly; "I'll dip the next in water."

Higby looked at the Judge as if to say, "Isn't she a wonderful woman," and the Judge in a quiet way seemed to return the glance and say, "She is!"

The poor little princess was delighted to get some food. She flapped her wings, which had now grown quite large, until she embraced Mrs. Blodgett's hand with them. She loved to feel the food slipping down her throat, and how comfortable was her crop when at last it was quite full, and Mrs. Blodgett was giving her sips of water from a coffee spoon.

The princess had learned to drink in that way, though it was very hard for her, as a pigeon, unlike most other birds, keeps its head down while drinking.

After Mrs. Blodgett had finished feeding the

princess she carefully wiped her beak, and put her back in the basket.

Then in a somewhat hesitating and embarrassed manner she cleaned up some water drops from the table, and cast scrutinizing glances at the Judge from under her eyelids.

He did not see her. His mind was wandering. His body was in the room, but his thoughts were at the hospital with his cruelly injured grandson.

Mrs. Blodgett waved Higby from the room. Then, soberly depositing the basket on a corner of the hearth rug, she too slipped out.

The princess lay quietly in her basket, just keeping one eye on the Judge. She was a discreet young pigeon, but then all pigeons are discreet. They are hatched with serious dispositions. Play rarely enters into their thoughts. They want to work, to eat, and not to be taken from their homes, for, next to cats, pigeons love their own locality.

The Judge never looked at the princess, and after standing up to clean and arrange her feathers, the last thing a well bred pigeon does at night, she went to sleep.

The poor Judge sank into an easy-chair. Hour after hour he sat buried there, buried in sorrow. At midnight he got up and went to the telephone on a desk by the window.

"Give me the City Hospital," he said, and then he went on: "Judge Sancroft is speaking. How is my grandson?"

He groaned when he received the message: "Boy remains the same—condition unchanged." Then he went back to his easy-chair.

At intervals all through the night he went from his chair to the telephone, and back again.

His face would light up when he approached the desk. Then as the too familiar reply came back it would fall, his head would sink on his breast, his shoulders would droop, and with the step of an old and weary man he would turn away.

Toward morning, when he painfully dragged himself to the desk, his face did not light up. He was giving up hope. However, it did light up, and with an unearthly radiance too, when the answer this time came to him: "Boy better—has regained consciousness, and is asking for you. Come at once."

The Judge sprang up like a boy. He raised his two hands to heaven, "God be praised—if the boy lives, a double contribution to the poor—another boy to share his life—an end to my selfishness—if he lives—if he lives," and burying his face in his hands the dear old Judge sobbed like a baby.

CHAPTER III

HAPPY TIMES

АН! that was the beginning of happy times for the princess.

"Grandfather!" said Titus, weakly, "I have been acting a lie, but don't punish the bird." That was one of the first sentences he uttered.

"Hush, hush!" said the Judge, soothingly. "Hush, my boy, your pigeon is in my study. Go to sleep—there is nothing to worry about."

Then he sat and looked blissfully and curiously at the tired, closed eyes. What fancy was this, or, to go deeper, what sympathy, what affinity was it that drew the first thought of an almost mortally wounded boy to a member of the bird world? That pigeon was more to him than anything else, apparently.

"Doctor," he said in a low voice, getting up and going over to the white-haired superintendent of the hospital who happened to be at the other end of the room, "are all lads fond of animals?"

"Almost all healthy, normal ones are, according to my observation," replied the doctor.

"What is the philosophy of it?"

"I don't know," said the man, frankly. "I can remember my own passion for animals when I was young, but I have outgrown it. A little girl loves her doll, a boy his dog. The woman casts aside her doll for her daughter—"

"And the boy, or the man, has his sons," whispered the Judge.

The doctor nodded. "The young of any kind of creature is interested in the young of any other. Sometimes they keep the interest to maturity, sometimes they don't."

"I can understand a boy's interest in a dog," murmured the Judge, "but a pigeon—"

"Is that lad attached to a pigeon?" inquired the doctor, with a sharp look at the bed.

"Yes, very much so."

"And is inquiring about it?"

"Yes."

"Then take good care of it," said the doctor, "and if it dies don't let him know."

The Judge nodded, and went back to the bed.

The doctor's advice was repeated at home in the big stone house.

"Didn't I tell you so!" exclaimed Mrs. Blodgett in huge delight, "didn't I tell you so!" and she immediately went downtown and bought a new basket for the princess, who fell into a most unaristocratic rage when she was put into it.

"Pigeons is like ca-ca-cats," remarked Higby, who was watching Mrs. Blodgett induct the princess into her new home. "They h-h-hate changes."

"But, darlin' princess, look at the white ribbons," said Mrs. Blodgett, cajolingly, "an' the pretty German straw. Why, it's a lovely basket."

"Rookety cahoo! rookety cahoo!" said the princess, stepping high and wrathfully shaking her hood.

"Rookety cahoo! or no rookety cahoo!" said Mrs. Blodgett, decidedly, "you've got to have it. No dirty

old baskets in the Judge's study. You've got to be kept as clean as clean. Higby, you clear up that litter of straw. She aint goin' to sit on it any more. I've got a roll of scrim to make her cushions. She drags the straw about with her claws all over the carpet—and we aint goin' to feed her in here any more. She drops seeds. We'll take her in the pantry. I don't want the Judge to turn her out of his room. If anything happened to her anywhere else we'd be blamed."

"The Judge don't take n-n-no notice of her," grumbled Higby.

"Don't he—that's all you know. I see him lookin' at her, an' weighin' her actions, an' sizin' her up. I'll bet you he never knew so much about pigeons afore."

It was true that the Judge was observing Princess Sukey. He was obliged to do so, for as soon as Titus was allowed to talk he seemed bewitched to get on to the subject of his pigeon. How did she look, had she grown much—there were a few little feathers under her wings that had not started—had they appeared yet? and the Judge was obliged to answer all his questions, and if his observations of the pigeon had not been sufficiently narrow he had to promise to make more.

The days passed by. Young Titus went steadily forward. He never lost a step. The hospital authorities declared that his recuperative powers were marvelous, and the Judge, who had painfully feared some hereditary weakness, silently bowed his head and gave thanks.

One day Mrs. Blodgett went into the Judge's

study, which was a beautiful room looking south, and having large windows opening on a balcony. She was in search of the princess, and the pigeon, seeing her coming, hurried somewhat apprehensively out to this balcony. She had been out of bounds, and Mrs. Blodgett owned a little switch which she kept hidden behind one of the bookcases.

The princess was only allowed to sit or stand in her basket, which stood on a square of oilcloth by the fireplace, to walk directly to the balcony, or directly back. She must not linger in corners of the room, or fly up on the bookcases, the tables, or the desk.

Just now she had been loitering under one of the tables, picking at the flowers in the carpet; therefore, seeing Mrs. Blodgett, she took to the balcony.

Mrs. Blodgett laughed good-humoredly, "I am not going to whip you to-day. I am ordered to take you to the hospital to see your young master, and mind you are a good bird."

The princess submitted to being caught and put in her basket. Mrs. Blodgett tied a piece of stout paper firmly over her, then putting the basket on her arm she went downstairs and out of doors to the street, where the coachman Roblee was awaiting her with the Judge's carriage.

The rubber-tired wheels moved softly over the asphalt pavement, but the princess liked neither the confinement nor the motion, and she was a frightened-looking bird when she reached the hospital.

Titus did not say much, but his black eyes sparkled when Mrs. Blodgett put the basket down on his bed.

"W-w-whew!" he said after a time, "isn't she a beauty—a real princess!"

Sukey cared nothing for his admiration. She was in a strange place, and raising her beautiful hooded head she gazed apprehensively and miserably about her.

Not one sound would she utter, and when Titus tried to caress her she would slip her soft back from under his hand and trot toward Mrs. Blodgett.

"S-s-she has forgotten me," said the boy, with a chagrined air.

"Don't you believe it, Master Titus," replied Mrs. Blodgett, consolingly. "She always do act that way when you takes her in a strange place."

However, she had forgotten Titus, or she had transferred her affections to others. That was confirmed when the boy returned home a few weeks later.

His grandfather had insisted upon his staying in the hospital until he was quite well, but everything comes to him who waits, and at last the day arrived when Titus's belongings were packed. He himself limped out of his room, and down the long halls and staircases, and entered the carriage waiting for him.

A nurse went with him, for his grandfather was confined at home with a slight cold.

When the carriage drove up to the door Titus hobbled up the steps and greeted the servants, who were all waiting for him.

"H-h-how do you do, everybody?" he called out, cheerily, "H-h-here I am as good as new, except a scar on my forehead, and one foot a little bit crooked.



“W-w-whew!” he said after a time, “isn’t she a beauty
—a real princess!”

W-where's grandfather?" and he limped upstairs to the Judge's study.

He was not a demonstrative boy, but on this day he gave his grandfather a bearish hug; then, as if he were ashamed of so much expansion, he turned on his heel and said, "Where's the pigeon?"

His grandfather smiled. "There she is."

Titus looked around. The princess's back was toward him; she was very busy about something, he could not tell what.

He stepped forward and recognized an enormous pincushion, the property of Mrs. Blodgett. It was stuck full of large, round-headed pins, and the pigeon was amusing herself by pulling out these pins and throwing them on her square of oilcloth.

"W-w-what is she doing that for?" asked the boy, in amazement.

"To kill time, I suppose," replied his grandfather. "It is my proud privilege to pick up the pins and stick them in the cushion when she has drawn them all out."

"W-w-well, I never!" exclaimed Titus, with open mouth. "I never saw a pigeon play before." Then he said, "Sukey!"

The pigeon turned round.

"P-p-pretty bird," he went on.

"O, rookety cahoo!" she said, irritably, and as he continued to pet her she walked up and down the oilcloth, shaking her head and setting her hood quivering.

There was a lovely greenish sheen on the red neck feathers, and Titus exclaimed admiringly, "Y-you beauty!"

Sukey in a rage uttered a series of choking "Rook-ety cahoos!" then she flew on the Judge's shoulder.

Titus was awestruck. "Do you let her do that?" he asked.

"I can't help it," said the Judge, sheepishly trying to drive her away.

She resisted him, and rapidly turning would give Titus a wrathful glance, and would then peck lovingly at the Judge's ear.

"I've spoiled her," said the Judge, weakly.

Titus sank into a chair.

"Here take her," said his grandfather, reaching up both hands, seizing the bird bodily, and depositing her on his grandson's knee.

The boy held her, and gently stroked her head. Struggling furiously, she caught hold of his fingers, bit them sharply until he released her, when she flew to the Judge's knee, and seemed to be telling him a long story of insult and injury.

The Judge could not help laughing, and finally Titus laughed too. Then he said, "W-w-well, I've lost my pigeon."

"Never mind," said his grandfather, "you shall have some others for yourself. I spoke to a carpenter the other day about making a loft up at the stable for you."

Titus gave his grandfather a queer look. Then after a long silence he said, strangely, "Y-you don't mean it?"

"But I do."

The boy was overcome, and turning round in his chair he laid his head on his arm. To have pigeons—to have a loft like Charlie Brown's—to see his

very own birds strutting about in it, to buy and sell and bargain in the way so dear to boyish hearts.

"Grandfather," he said after a time, and now he was so much moved that he did not stutter, "I'm not just the same as when I went into the hospital."

"Indeed!" said his grandfather, kindly.

"No, sir. I thought," and he pointed a finger at the princess, "that I'd raise and sell her, but now I don't want to."

"Why not?"

"I don't know, sir."

"I will tell you," said his grandfather, very kindly and very seriously, "your hard lesson has taught you that a boy is not all legs, stomach, and brain. He has also a heart."

CHAPTER IV

THE JUDGE'S VOW

THE Judge often looked up at a large painting on his study wall—"Even This Shall Pass Away."

The words were issuing from the lips of an Oriental king who, seated on a magnificent throne, was receiving the homage of his courtiers. A half-sad, half-indulgent smile played about his face, and on his uplifted hand there could be seen the words deeply cut on a finger ring, "Even This Shall Pass Away."

The Judge often looked at this picture. How many, many things had passed away in his experience—things that apparently never would pass away! How the time had dragged when Titus lay ill in the hospital! It had seemed as if he would always be ill, as if his grandfather would always be at home, a worried and suffering man. But now only a few weeks had gone by and Titus was at home, and things were going on as they had before his accident.

The boy was going to school again—no fear of fights now. He could stutter as much as he pleased. The boys, half savages as some of them appeared to be, were afraid to touch him.

After breakfast the Judge read his paper, went downtown to the post office, the bank, and his club, then came home.

The princess was always waiting for him, in her basket by the hearth rug if it were raining, or on the balcony if it were fine.

As soon as he appeared in the doorway she flew to meet him, lighted on his shoulder, rubbed her beak gently against his ear, saying "Rookety cahoo!" a great number of times.

When he put her on the hardwood floor she would circle round his feet, and finally retire to her basket, where she sat and watched him.

He had become her prime favorite. She liked Mrs. Blodgett and Higby, and she endured Titus, but she loved the Judge.

On this particular day, or rather evening, she was very much disturbed. The Judge had had his nap in the afternoon, and his drive, and his dinner, and now in the firelight and incandescent light, when the room was snug and cozy, he ought to be reading in his big chair, with herself, the princess, on one arm of it, occasionally getting her head scratched. But instead of following the usual order of things he was muttering to himself something about a vow, and was pacing about the room.

The princess did not like it, and showed her displeasure by a succession of sulky "Rookety cahoos!" uttered from her basket.

After a time the Judge rang the bell.

"Jennie," he said when the parlor maid appeared, "ask Master Titus to come here after he finishes studying his lessons."

Half an hour later Titus came whistling down the hall.

"W-w-well, grandfather," he said, as he came into

the study, "what do you want—a-a-a game of backgammon?"

"No," said the Judge, "I want to talk to you. Sit down."

Titus threw himself into a chair, and stared at him.

"When you were ill," began the Judge, "I, in my extremity, promised my Maker that if you were spared to me I would show my gratitude by adopting some poor child who had no home of his own."

"W-w-whew!" exclaimed Titus, and he drew his black brows together.

The Judge was not surprised. He had feared that Titus might be jealous of another lad.

He waited a minute or two, then he went on firmly: "This was not blind impulse. I have all my life known that it was not good for a child to be brought up alone. Being alone tends to egotism. We are very happy, you and I, yet I know it would be better for you to have another lad to share your sorrows and joys."

"H-h-he might fight me," said Titus, gloomily.

"I shall get one much younger than you," replied the Judge.

"O-O-O!" said Titus, easily, "then I can lick him."

"Titus," said the Judge, "you know that there are boys and girls in the world less favored than yourself."

"Y-y-yes, sir, but they are dirty and lazy, and they have awful manners."

"If we get a young child we can mold him. I feel it my duty, boy. I have enough for you and

another lad. There is a fearful amount of suffering in the world. We should do what we can to lessen it."

"I-I-I don't want one of those River Street cubs," said Titus, sharply.

"I shall take the greatest pains to get a boy of good antecedents," said the Judge, decidedly. "You know that my profession has brought me into contact with crime and criminals. I have a horror of inherited vicious tendencies."

"A-a-all right, sir," replied Titus, with a sigh. "If you've promised we've got to do it," and getting up he walked over to his grandfather and threw his arm over his shoulder.

Titus was a reserved boy, but just now his slim young figure, pressed close to the chair in which the Judge sat, was brimful of eloquence.

The Judge's lip quivered. "Titus," he said, slowly, "I shall never love another boy as I love you, and, to tell the truth, I half wish now that I had not made that vow; but I was in dire trouble, and the Lord delivered me out of it. Should I not show gratitude?"

"Y-y-yes, sir," said Titus, hastily. "We've had a hard time. I had thoughts too, sir, when I was lying in bed so long. I've deceived you in lots of things. I'm going to be more straight—I-I-I guess it's all right to take a kid. W-w-we'll bring him to be just like you and me," and with a grin he rubbed his black head against his grandfather's white one, and then scampered away to bed.

Now the princess was happy. With a great sigh of relief the Judge settled himself back in his chair,

pulled the reading light toward him, and took up a book.

Sukey flew to his side, and when he became too much absorbed in his reading to rub her white head she leaned over and gently pecked his hand.

Young Titus's illness had extended over a long and cold autumn and into the first part of December. By Christmas time he was dashing about in his old way, though he still had a slight limp. Only time would cure that, the doctors said.

The limp did not keep him off his feet. From morning till night he was rushing about somewhere, and when the Christmas holidays came he was simply omnipresent.

According to a long-established custom, he and his grandfather went downtown every Christmas Eve to see the shops and the people. They started early on this Christmas Eve—just as soon as they had had their dinner—and they both would have been very much surprised if anyone had told them that during this evening a chance would come for the fulfillment of the Judge's vow.

Ever since he had mentioned the matter to Titus the Judge had been quietly looking about for a boy. He had visited several orphan asylums, and he had written to friends, but though the orphans were plentiful he was fastidious, and so far some defect had been found in every one proposed to him.

"This is a joyful season, sir," said young Titus, as he endeavored to stride along in a manly fashion beside his grandfather.

The Judge nodded, for this particular season was, as Titus said, an ideal one. Enough snow had fallen

to make sleighing pleasant, the air was clear and frosty, but not too sharp, and the days were cloudless and the nights bright. It was a pleasure to be out.

The usual Christmas stir prevailed. The streets were full of people, the shops were crowded. The Judge and Titus had nothing to buy. The boy had bought his presents for his grandfather and the servants, and the Judge had his gifts all neatly done up and labeled. They were in two of the big drawers of one of his bookcases, and Princess Sukey, the pigeon, had been the only one to see them as yet.

Everything was gay and cheerful. Nobody seemed sad, nobody sorry. Boys and girls, men and women, were laughing and talking cheerily, and Titus was staring about, his eyes going this way and that way, until at last his grandfather turned his wandering gaze in one direction by saying, "What do you suppose is the matter with that boy?"

Titus looked straight in front of him.

A small child clad in a long coat and having on a shabby fur cap was trotting along in front of them. Sometimes he would take several steps in a straight and assured way, then he would falter and stagger. Once in a while he would reel up against the shop windows. Upon one of these occasions he pressed his little face against the frosty glass and gazed in at the toys.

The child's cheeks were white and dirty, his eyes were sleepy, and Titus said in a puzzled way, "Do you suppose anyone would give him anything to make him stagger?"

"Hardly," said the Judge, "the little fellow must have extraordinarily weak ankles. Watch him."

The child set out again, and this time he staggered so badly that he fell on the snowy pavement. There he sat with his little face bent, a curious smile playing about his lips as he gazed, not at the passers-by, but down at the ice and snow.

The Judge and Titus were the first to reach him. "Here," said the Judge, and he looked down at the child, "try again," and he set him on his feet.

The little boy gave him a slow, scrutinizing glance, then he smiled mysteriously and said, "My little trotters slipped on the ghosts of running things."

"A-a-are you ill?" asked Titus, sharply.

The child softly patted the front of his coat with his mittened hand, "They kept me late, and Mr. Rat is at his old tricks."

"You are hungry," said the Judge.

The child yawned—such a tired, weak little yawn that, to the Judge's surprise, he tried to suppress. Then he nodded his little head a great many times. "There's something in the oven for me, but it's a long way there."

"We are obstructing the way," said the Judge, and indeed many persons had stopped and were listening. "Take his hand, Titus—here, child, come into this restaurant."

Like one walking in sleep he gave his hand to Titus, and allowed himself to be led into the brilliantly lighted white and gold room.

"W-w-wonder what he thinks of it?" murmured Titus to himself. "Here, boy, take off your cap."

The little boy struggled to keep his hairy or almost hairless headgear, but Titus was inexorable. He finally gave it up, but he gazed at Titus with a slightly injured air, as the bigger boy handed the shabby fur thing to the waiter.

Then with babyish vanity he put up a hand and smoothed the thin crop of curls plastered down on his forehead by a band of perspiration.

"What will you have?" said the Judge to him after they had seated themselves at a small table.

"Cats like milk," he said, dreamily, "and dogs like broo."

Titus stared at him, then he said under his breath to his grandfather, "I-i-is he crazy?"

"No, he is repeating a Scotch jingle. 'Broo' is broth. He is terribly tired. Child," he went on, "would you like me to read you the *menu*?"

"Please, sir," he said, shyly, and with tired grace he handed the Judge the bit of cardboard with which he was playing.

The Judge elevated his eyebrows, put on his eye-glasses, and took the *menu* from him.

"Oysters, sir," said the child, seriously, when the Judge had run over the list, "*bouillon*, and Democrat-Republican ice cream."

Democrat-Republican ice cream was a specialty of this same first-class restaurant, and Titus, hearing this poverty-stricken child show familiarity with its merits, snickered aloud in his amusement.

His grandfather gave him a warning glance, but the child had not heard him. He was wearily looking about the pretty room with an air that said, "I have seen all this before." Then, while waiting for

their orders to be filled, he quietly dropped to sleep.

Meanwhile the Judge and Titus studied his appearance.

"Do you see," said the Judge, "that though his face and hands are dirty his wrists are clean. He is only dirty outside. Look at his ragged little shirt cuffs. They are quite white—and how nicely his coat is darned."

Titus nodded, and as the Judge noted the kindly look on the boy's face as he surveyed the sleeping child a light broke over his own face. He was not romantic nor sentimental, but he was a religious man, and he believed in the leadings of Providence.

He had been guided to this boy. What a brother he would make for Titus—that is, and he prudently added an afterthought, if he was without incumbrances, and his antecedents were good—and meanwhile the little child slept on.

"B-b-boy," said Titus, presently, "wake up, and eat your victuals."

The child opened his eyes, smiled sweetly at him, and calmly took up a fork.

He went to sleep between oysters and *bouillon*, and *bouillon* and ice cream. He slept putting a piece of bread to his mouth—indeed, he slept with such frequency that Titus wondered how he managed to tuck away so much food.

At last he had finished, and then he did something that considerably mystified the Judge and Titus.

After wiping his mouth with his napkin he put the napkin on the table, and unbuttoning his coat he slipped a hand in the front of it.

As he did this the sleepy look left his eyes, and a sorrowful one came in its place. Drawing out a small handkerchief with a border of marvelous lions and tigers, he unrolled it, pretended to take something out of it and put it on the table. Then he placed crumbs of bread and cake before this imaginary thing.

"W-w-what are you doing?" asked Titus, bluntly.

"Feeding the little one," said the child, solemnly.

"W-w-what little one? There isn't any there."

"Don't you see my little mouse?" he asked, impatiently.

"A-a-a mouse!" exclaimed Titus, "je-whillikens! I don't like mice."

"He's dead," said the child, softly; "a strange pussy killed him—not our pussy."

"H-h-how can you feed him if he's dead?" pursued Titus, with boyish callousness.

"But he has a little ghost," said the strange child, gently shaking his head, "and I carry it here—have you had enough, mousie?" and he tenderly lowered his head to the table.

"Yes," he said, softly speaking to himself; then he took up the ghost, wrapped it in his handkerchief, and put it back in his little bosom.

The Judge felt a strange misgiving. Another animal enthusiast—and this one worse than Titus, for Titus had little imagination, and interested himself only with the live bodies of animals, not their dead shades.

The mouse episode over, the child again became sleepy. Titus, who had managed to dispose of some ice cream himself, jammed the boy's fur cap down on

his head, and guided his steps behind the Judge to the door of the restaurant.

There the child sank down on the doorstep.

"U-u-upon my word," stuttered Titus, "he's saying his prayers. T-t-this time he'll be off for good—must have been drugged."

"It's a case of natural or unnatural fatigue," said his grandfather. "Drugs would probably cause him to sleep uninterruptedly. Go get a sleigh and we will drive him home. Child," and he bent down and slightly shook him, "where do you live?"

"Forty-five River Street," he replied, drowsily, "at Mrs. Tingsby's."

When he found himself lifted in among warm fur sleigh robes he slept more soundly than ever.

"River Street—River Street," said the Judge. "Poor child!"

In a short time they had left the crowded, brightly lighted streets, and were traversing the long, dingy narrow one that Titus so much disliked.

On one side of the street there were wharves behind the houses. The traffic for the day was over, and the wharves were dull and deserted, but there was some life on the street, particularly about the saloons and small shops.

Even River Street must have its Christmas Eve.

"Forty-five," said the driver, "here it is," and he stopped beside a narrow house—the middle one of three dingy, uninviting dwellings.

"Mere shells of buildings," muttered the Judge, glancing up at the houses, "and the poor haven't coal to heat them, while we with well built houses have plenty of fuel."

When the sleigh stopped, and the merry jingle of the horses' bells ceased, a curtain was pulled aside from a window of number forty-five, then the door flew open, and a thin slip of a woman in a cotton dress ran out to meet them.

"O, the child! the child!—don't say death to me!"

"Motherly anxiety," commented the Judge to himself, and strange to say his heart sank. If the boy had a mother he would never get him.

He stared at the excited wisp of a woman who was dragging the child from the fur robes, and was violently hugging him. "O, Bethany! Bethany! you aint dead."

"Dead, no," said the Judge, "he is only asleep," and he proceeded to tell the woman the story of their finding the child.

She listened to him, holding her head up, and with a strained expression on her thin face, and after a time the Judge stopped talking, for he discovered that she had not heard a word of what he was saying.

"I'm deaf!" she exclaimed, "deefier than that iron post. Come in, come in," and clutching the little boy firmly by the hand she backed into a tiny hall, and threw open the door of a small front room where a table was set as if for a meal.

"Wait for us," said the Judge to the cabman, then he followed her.

The cloth on the table was white but threadbare, and the appointments were all so meager that the Judge averted his head. He had a tender heart, and now that he was getting toward old age the awful inequality between the lot of the rich and the poor struck a painful sympathy to his heart.

“What makes this boy so sleepy?” he asked, pointing to the little child.

The woman saw his gesture. “Ah! sir,” she said, “it’s cruel to keep them so late. They begin work at nine in the morning.”

“Work!” echoed Titus.

His clear young voice reached the deaf woman’s ear.

“That there child,” she said, pointing to the little boy, who was sitting on a small stool stifling yawns, “has been at work sence nine this morning with bare an hour for lunch—just as sure as I’m a livin’ woman.”

“What work does he do?” asked the Judge.

The woman did not hear him, but she guessed what his question would be.

“From nine to five is the hours, and in the sight of my Maker I vow I’d not let any child in my care go to sech slavery, if it weren’t that I’m so hard pressed that upon my word the soul is fairly racked out of me to get victuals for my children.”

“What does he do?” roared the Judge in her ear.

“Do, sir—makes paper boxes. You know about Christmas time how the rich folks must have boxes to put their candy in. The contracts for boxes is let out to men who swallow up the poor. There’s dozens of poor children a-slavin’ in this city, agin’ the law and unbeknownst to the law. I wish the Lord had never made Christmas. It’s a good time for the rich. You take out your fat pocketbooks an’ order presents for each other, an’ you wait till the last minute, an’ then the poor has to go to work.”

The Judge wrinkled his white brows.

"Look at that table, sir," continued the woman, "set sence five o'clock this evenin'—the time the poor is supposed to git off. Look at the sour bread the baker sells us, an' the salt butter the grocer weighs us, an' the molasses, an' rind of cheese. That's our Christmas Eve supper, but sech as it is it's been waitin' for hours for my boarders."

The Judge said nothing, but his gaze went round the shabby room. Nothing more unlike his idea of a boarding house could be imagined.

The little thin woman with the sharp eyes interpreted his glance.

"Yes, sir, I earns my livin' by keepin' boarders—ever sence my husband was poisoned to death by work in the city sewers. There's that boarder," and she pointed to a plate on the table—"Matthew Jones. He works in a fur store—overtime now, because it's Christmas, and some grand lady must have her set of sables to-night. The light is poor in his work-room, an' his eyes is bad, but no matter—he's got to work or be fired. Then next to him sits Harry Ray. He's in the express employ. Only seventeen, an' an orphan. He's drivin' till one and two every night now, an' eatin' his lunch on his seat in his cart. He's got an awful cold. After Christmas he'll likely take time to have newmania or grip. Then there's old man Fanley. He's carryin' parcels for a small firm—poor old soul, stumblin' round in the cold at night when he ought to be in bed. O! sir, we don't hate work, we poor uns, we'll slave all day, but I do think the rich might let us have our nights. We'd serve 'em better, sir, we would."

The Judge bent his white head and nodded it

sadly. At times there seemed no joy, no pleasure in life, only stern taskmasters and shrinking slaves.

"It's hardest on the children," pursued the woman in a lower tone. "My heart bleeds for 'em. I've just got me own in bed. They're all workin' too, now that it's holiday time. I was just waitin' for this stray lamb," and her glance softened as it fell on the bobbing form of the sleeping child.

The Judge raised his head. "Isn't this your child?" he asked, sharply.

The woman turned to Titus. "What do he say?"

Titus repeated the question, and she intently watched the motion of his lips.

"My child!" she exclaimed. "O, law no! Look at my hair, sir, black as a crow's. Those curls be quite light," and she stepped over and laid a hand on the child's head.

"Whose child is he?" asked the Judge.

The woman turned to Titus with an impatient gesture. "You say it. His mustache do cover his lips. I can't see 'em."

"P-parents," cried Titus, "of that boy. Who is his mother?"

"Mother!" repeated Mrs. Tingsby, "nay, that I can't say till I finds an owner for the child. 'Susan Tingsby,' said his ma when she lay a-dyin' in this very house, 'Susan Tingsby, you've been a good friend to me. When the Lord sends some one to take my baby tell my poor story, such as it is'—an', sir, I've kept the child these ten months. Often I've hardly had bread for me own, but the child of the stranger never suffered."

The Judge sat quietly for a few minutes. Now

that his attention was called to the fact that the woman was not the child's mother he saw quite a difference in their faces. Mrs. Tingsby's sharp, dark features were very unlike the pale, plump face of the little one.

"Yes!" she suddenly ejaculated, "the child's fat enough."

The Judge looked at her. Though deaf she was not stupid, and she was marvelously clever at understanding one's thoughts.

"The children of the poor is mostly that," she continued. "Much sour bread puffs 'em out, an' likewise fresh air which they has plenty of. But bless your heart, it aint good flesh like rich children's. Newmania and consumption takes 'em off like smoke."

"Ask her to what station in life the boy's mother belonged," said the Judge to Titus.

"W-w-was its mother a lady?" vociferated the boy, with a nod toward the child.

"A lady! Well, I guess so," replied Mrs. Tingsby, indignantly, "as much as you be. She were a school-teacher—out of New York. I know her maiden name. Her husband's name weren't nothin' remarkable. I don't mind sayin' it. It were Smith."

"Ask her what the husband's character was," said the Judge.

"H-h-husband," continued Titus, "was he good?"

"He were an imp," said Mrs. Tingsby, shortly.

"An imp," murmured the Judge. "Go on, Titus, extract some more information. You can guess pretty well what I want to know."

"W-w-what do you mean by an imp?" stuttered

the boy, speaking very slowly, and shaping his words well with his mouth.

"Well, young sir," said Mrs. Tingsby, ironically, "when you grows up and marries a wife, and goes off an' leaves her in a poor boardin' place like this, an' only comes home once in a while, an' takes her an' the child to a swell restaurant for lunch, an' then goes off an' leaves her to bread and molasses again, I'll say you are an imp."

"I-I-I don't care much for this woman," said the abashed Titus under his breath to his grandfather.

"Never mind, boy—she means well. Ask some more questions. What was the husband's business?"

Titus grinned in an embarrassed way. "W-w-what was the imp's business?" he inquired.

"Servin' his master," said the woman, shortly, and with a glance at the now sleeping child, "an' sometimes gettin' big pay, an' sometimes poor—what's his business?" and she abruptly jerked a forefinger in the Judge's direction.

"H-h-he's a judge," said the boy, proudly, "re-tired a few years ago—o-o-on account of ill health," he added; "but he's all right now."

"Ah!" replied Mrs. Tingsby, and still staring at the Judge she addressed him significantly, "maybe you've seen him purfessionally."

Judge Sancroft felt an inward recoil, though he said nothing. But he rose almost immediately, and looked at his grandson.

Mrs. Tingsby was a remarkably shrewd woman. Under the Judge's reserved exterior she saw plainly that his heart had been going out to the orphan child.

"The father is dead," she said, briefly, "buried by the mother—an' she were a saint on earth, an' is now a saint in heaven."

The Judge said nothing, and picking up his fur gloves he slowly began to draw them on.

Mrs. Tingsby's strained, eager face was bent on him. "The father of the imp were a minister of the gospel," she continued, "an' the imp's wife—"

She paused an instant. The dead woman had told her clearly not to reveal her maiden name except to the person who would adopt her child; but Mrs. Tingsby was so sure that this person stood before her that she made up her mind to a slight breach of confidence.

"The mother were a Hittaker," she said, grandly.

The Judge had never heard of the Hittakers, and therefore did not look impressed.

The woman in her anxiety pulled Titus by the sleeve. "Ask him—aint he heard of Hittaker—big soap manufacturer. Why, it's in all the groceries."

Titus shook his head. He saw that his grandfather did not know the name.

"Inquire why she does not apply to these people," said Judge Sancroft.

Titus asked her.

"Apply to 'em! Bless you, didn't she? What won't a woman do for her child. But her own parents be dead. These Hittakers be uncle and cousin to her, an' they wouldn't do a thing—sent back her last letter."

The Judge got up. "I'll send some one to you," he said. "Titus, you tell her. I'll report her case, and have some aid given her."

Titus in his boyish fashion rattled off a sentence. "M-m-my grandfather will send help to you. Maybe he can get the child a home."

Mrs. Tingsby laid a lean hand on Titus, but she looked at his grandfather. "An' you don't want the orphan yourself, sir?"

The Judge shook his head.

Mrs. Tingsby locked her hands together. "I like your face, sir. There has been people fancyin' the child, but I didn't fancy 'em."

Judge Sancroft smiled faintly. Then his hand went toward his pocket.

The little woman's face flushed crimson. "I'm no beggar, sir. I've no wish for money I can't earn." The Judge put out a hand and took hers. "Titus, shake hands with her," he said.

"G-g-grandfather," ejaculated the boy as they stepped over the threshold of the door leading into the little dark hall, "look at her!"

Mrs. Tingsby stood holding the small lamp aloft for them, with tears running down her cheeks, and a painful, almost terrified, expression in her eyes.

"I've told a dead woman's secret, sir," she said in response to the Judge's look of inquiry. "I've risked me soul, an' it aint done no good."

The woman's expression of suffering was so genuine that the Judge stopped short. How cruel to lay another burden on this already overburdened back!

She was an honest woman, he could see that. He had had a long experience in the study of human nature, and she would not have been able to deceive

him if she had wished. Suppose he took the child from her. With his connections and influence he could easily find a home for it.

"Madam," he said, courteously, and stepping back, "this is Christmas Eve, and from my heart I wish you good cheer. If it will give you pleasure, I am willing to take the child, and to pledge myself to find a good home for him."

The woman again twitched Titus by the sleeve. She had partly, but not wholly, understood.

Titus, who was getting excited, stopped stuttering and told her.

When he finished she turned round, set the lamp down on the table, and threw up her hands.

"Thank the Lord! Thank the Lord! Here, duckie, old Mother Tingsby has found you a home. Stir up, and go with the gentleman," and in feverish haste she aroused the sleeping child, got him on his feet, and put his cap on his head.

"Well, well," said the Judge, in some hesitation, "I did not think of taking him to-night."

The woman did not hear him, though she spoke as if she had. "Better have it over in darkness, with none to see and none to hear. I don't want to drag down that sweet woman's child by any connection with me. Ah! sir, she was like a sister to me. I'll miss her child," and with very genuine regret she embraced the bewildered little boy.

"I assure you," vociferated the Judge, "that I am not in the habit of doing things in secret. I do not care who knows that I have taken a poor child from River Street."

Mrs. Tingsby did not hear him, and Titus was too

excited to report, so the Judge slightly shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll miss my baby—I'll miss my baby!" she cried, "for there's not a soul younger in the house but the kitten—good-bye, pet—good-bye. Old Mother Tingsby will sometimes sneak up to look in your windows. Sir, you'll never give up this child—you'll let your soul go first."

The Judge smiled slightly, and catching this smile she suddenly flung up her black head and fixed two shrewd eyes on him.

"Sir, don't you be afraid of no fathers an' grand-fathers. Some of my boarders was talkin' the other evenin'. Says one of 'em, says he, 'I've been readin' a magazine article. It says everyone of us has had thieves an' robbers in our ancestors.' Do you believe that, sir?"

The Judge, in a slightly bewildered state of mind, was pushing his way out to the hall door, beyond this flood of talk. He had a feeling that he would like to reach the quiet of his own home, and think things over. However, some sort of an answer was due to her, so he turned once more. "I would rather have had that boy's father an honest man."

Mrs. Tingsby was so close on his heels, and was listening so intently, that she caught a few words.

"Boy—yes!" she exclaimed, nodding her head at Titus, and grinning amiably, "an honest boy!"

"I say," roared the Judge, stopping short, "that I wish your little boy had had an unblemished parentage."

"My boy," she responded, sadly, "my boy—why,

sir, I have three—an' how I'm goin' to raise 'em the Lord knows."

Meanwhile the child was drawing back. He was now thoroughly roused from sleep, and his little face was quite disturbed.

"Mother Tingsby," he said, pulling at the woman's gown, and drawing down her ear to his small mouth, "is this the husband of the good third mother?"

"Yes, lamb, yes," said the woman, nodding her head a great many times, "an' your second mother bids you go. Be good an' clever."

The child gave her an anguished glance. He did not wish to go with these strangers. However, he had been trained to look forward to just such an event, and he made no protest. Putting his little hand in the one that Titus held out, he followed the Judge to the street.

CHAPTER V

A SURPRISE FOR THE JUDGE

No one spoke on the way home. The Judge and Titus on the back seat of the sleigh scarcely took their eyes from the serious, little face of the strangely pale, quiet child opposite.

He was not sleepy now. They could see the two large brown eyes shining with the steady light of two solemn stars.

When they reached their home on the avenue, Titus politely assisted the child to alight, and took his hand as they went up the long steps.

Higby had gone to bed, and the parlor-maid's face as she opened the door was a study. Nobody explained matters to her, and in a complete state of mystification she was sent to request Mrs. Blodgett's immediate presence in the parlor.

Titus had lifted the little stranger to a chair, and was drawing off his cap and mittens.

"Mrs. Blodgett," said the Judge, when that good woman appeared, "I wish you to take charge of this child. Put him to sleep at once. If he is nervous, some one must sleep in the room with him. Don't give him a bath to-night. He is very tired. In the morning dress him and bring him down to breakfast."

Mrs. Blodgett, in amazement, looked down at the shabby child. Who was this? She was not fond

of children, except her own—and poor and dirty children she detested.

However, a little hand was stealing into hers. A tired, unhappy face was looking trustfully up at her, seeking the kind glances of a third mother.

Mrs. Blodgett would have been less than a woman if she could have resisted. This was probably some child who was here only for the night.

“Yes, sir,” she said, respectfully, and with the little boy clinging closely to her, instead of bestowing glances on the Judge and Titus, she went upstairs.

The Judge and his grandson did not talk much that night. The Judge slowly sipped his glass of hot milk and then went to bed. He lived a quiet life, and the adventure of the evening had given him many problems to think over.

Titus was quite excited. Ordinarily the approach of Christmas Day did not stir him very much, but now that there was another young person in the house he felt his pulse quickened. This strange boy must have some presents. Should he give him some of his new ones, or would old ones be sufficient? He would consult his grandfather about it. He had a lot of old toys up in the attic. To-morrow morning he would ask Higby to get them down, or, better still, he would take the youngster up there. Poor little chap—how mean to make him work, and with some hitherto unknown generous impulses animating his sturdy young breast Titus fell asleep.

He was late for breakfast the next morning. His grandfather had already had prayers, the servants

had scattered to their various employments, and Higby was just taking in a second supply of coffee to the dining room.

"B-b-beg pardon, grandfather," said Titus, hurrying in after the man. "I-I-I fell asleep again after Higby knocked at my door. M-merry Christmas and many of them!" and seating himself at the table he looked around in great approbation.

The long handsome room was flooded with sunlight.

"G-g-good old sun," ejaculated Titus, approvingly. "I-I-I can dress better when he shines on me. I-I-I hate the dark, early part of the morning. W-where's the child, sir?"

The Judge looked toward the door. Higby was just throwing it open for Mrs. Blodgett and her charge.

Then an amusing scene took place. In the doorway stood Mrs. Blodgett, and a pale, pretty little girl dressed in a dainty white cloth dress trimmed with gold braid.

The Judge and Titus looked at Mrs. Blodgett. They both knew that she possessed a little granddaughter of whom she was inordinately proud. This child sometimes came to the house, and she often presented her to the Judge for a word or a kind glance.

Just now he gave both—"A merry Christmas, little one. Come here and get an orange. Mrs. Blodgett, how is the boy this morning?"

Mrs. Blodgett pushed the child, who did not seem inclined to leave her, toward the Judge, then she said in a puzzled way, "The boy, sir?"

"Yes—the boy I brought home last night," replied the Judge.

"The boy, sir," she repeated in amazement, while an additional flood of color swept over her rubicund face. "There weren't no boy, sir."

The Judge gazed patiently at her. Mrs. Blodgett was getting older. He had noticed several times lately that she seemed a little stupid and did not understand quickly what was said to her.

"You surely remember the little boy I brought home with me last evening?"

Mrs. Blodgett gazed up at the ceiling, down at the floor, under the table, and behind her out into the hall as if seeking a lost child.

Then she said, faintly, "As I am a mortal woman, sir, I didn't see no boy, sir. He must have slipped off on the doorstep. I know these poor children. They're sneaky as foxes."

"No, he did not slip away," said the Judge, with a quiet smile. "I brought him in and gave him to you."

Mrs. Blodgett's face was purple, and she turned to Higby in quiet exasperation. "Now, if you'd been about, instead of bein' in bed, I'd have said it was some of them queer tricks of yours."

"Do not make a scapegoat of Higby," said the Judge, decidedly, "but let your memory go back to last evening. This is a serious matter, Mrs. Blodgett. I had a young boy in my charge. I am answerable for his safety. I brought him in the house and gave him into your care. Now, what has become of him?"

"Lawks-a-massy!" exclaimed Mrs. Blodgett, join-

ing her hands in embarrassment and staring wildly about her, "Is it you, Judge Sancroft, speakin', and am I, Dorinda Blodgett, a-listenin'?"

"You seem to be listening," remarked the Judge, dryly, "but you certainly are not understanding. Please go away and search your memory and the house for that boy. Titus, what is the matter with you?"

"Are you crazy, too?" the Judge felt like adding, but fortunately for himself he did not do so. While he had been speaking the child had been creeping shyly toward him, and Titus's eyes were glued on her. The Judge turned his eyes quickly on the little girl. Now that he examined her more closely he saw that this was no offspring from the Blodgett stock. Where had he seen before that thin band of curls, those big, solemn eyes?

"Sir," Mrs. Blodgett was sniffing miserably, while she made a ball of her pocket handkerchief, "you aint never doubted my word afore. It's time for me to quit your service."

"I am not doubting your word," he said, absently, "only—" and he again stared at the child.

"Where did you get this little girl?" he asked, shortly.

"'Tis the same little girl you brought in last evenin', sir, the same little girl what weren't accompanied by no boy, sure as I'm alive. Jennie, she saw her—ask her if there were a boy too."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed the Judge, bringing his hand down on the table. "Upon my word!"

Titus's eyes were absolutely sticking out of his

head. Then he began to cough, then to laugh, then to choke.

"Sir," said Mrs. Blodgett, uneasily, "she were dressed something like a boy outside, but inside was such a miserable little frock that I took the liberty of putting on her one of my grandchild, Mary Ann's, outgrown party ones that I'm goin' to give to an orphan asylum."

Still the Judge did not speak, and Mrs. Blodgett went on. "'Pears to me, now I think of it, you did tell me to take this little boy an' put him to bed. I didn't pay no attention, sir. As much as I honors you, I couldn't think to change my Maker's decrees by makin' a little girl a little boy."

"O, grandfather!" gasped Titus, half under the table. "O! O! grandfather!"

The Judge's face relaxed, then he looked about him and began to smile. Then he laughed—laughed so heartily that Mrs. Blodgett, who was no simpleton, and who was beginning to understand, joined in. Higby, delighted to find no share of mismanagement attributed to him, snickered agreeably, and even the maids who had just come up from the kitchen and were going to their work in different parts of the house, hearing the sound of enjoyable laughter, echoed it light-heartedly.

"This is a good Christmas joke on you and me, Titus," said the Judge at last, putting his handkerchief to his face to wipe his eyes. "It is said that one finds what one looks for. We were looking for a boy, and we persuaded ourselves that we had found one."

"Did that woman try to deceive you, sir?" asked

Titus, drawing his head from under the table and casting a comical glance at his grandfather, then at the little girl.

"No, she had the appearance of an honest woman, but her deafness prevented her from hearing us fully. Now that I think of it, she did not once say that the child was a boy. We jumped to that conclusion. Why did you not tell us what you were?" and he turned to the child.

She gave him a quiet smile that assured him that she had not intentionally deceived him, and then he saw that her mouth was parched and open, and that her lips moved slightly as she looked beyond him toward the table.

"You are hungry," he said, courteously. "Higby, lift her to her seat."

The child looked over her shoulder at Mrs. Blodgett. She wished to sit down at the table with her, and with a deeply gratified smile the housekeeper stepped forward and arranged her in her chair. That glance would be set down to the little stranger's credit.

"I have to beg your pardon, Mrs. Blodgett," said the Judge. "There was a misunderstanding all round. This little girl is an orphan. I offered to find a home for her, thinking that she was a boy because she was dressed like one. She has probably had on the borrowed garments of a little boy belonging to the kind woman who has taken care of her."

"It's all right, sir," said Mrs. Blodgett. "I might a-remembered what you said. I call back now that you told me plainly she was a boy, but, as I said

afore, you can't change nater," and with another gratified smile she waddled away.

Meanwhile Titus, having recovered, or nearly recovered, himself, for he found it necessary to drop his napkin on the floor every two minutes and to be a long time in picking it up, stared almost uninterruptedly at the little girl.

She was eating an orange that the Judge had given her, eating it prettily and quietly and without splashing the juice on her white gown, and casting meantime curious and searching glances about the room.

The boy or girl problem disturbed the Judge somewhat. He could not get it out of his head that she was a boy. It was extremely disappointing that she was not, for now she would be no companion for Titus.

"Child," he asked, kindly, "what is your name?"

"Bethany," she replied, in a low voice, "little Bethany. My mamma was big Bethany."

"Little Bethany," said the Judge, "that is a nice name. Now, what are you going to have? Will you eat mush, cornmeal mush?"

"If you please, sir."

"Higby, give her some—put plenty of cream on it—Indian corn is what our ancestors here in New England raised and gave to their children. We don't eat enough of it nowadays."

Titus, stricken with sudden shyness, would not talk to the child. He knew nothing about girls, and did not care for them, so the Judge felt it his duty to keep up a conversation.

"How old are you?" he asked.

"Seven, sir," she replied.

"Do you like that mush?" he continued, politely.

She paused with spoon uplifted, "It is simply delicious, sir."

Titus got up and took a turn to the sideboard. His grandfather eyed him warningly. He had laughed enough.

Suddenly the clock struck ten, and as it struck the child lost her quietly contented air and, blushing painfully, counted the strokes as they rang out.

"O, sir," she cried, with a guilty start and laying down her spoon, "I'm an hour late. I must get to work—the boss will be *so* angry."

The Judge stared at her. The light died out of his own eyes, an iron hand gripped his heart.

In the face of that tiny child, in her start, her fear of consequences, he suddenly felt the pain of the world. Outraged childhood with its bleeding wounds stood before him.

A great lump rose in his throat. For a minute it seemed as if his agony could not be borne.

He groaned heavily, then he threw up his head. "Child!" he said, harshly, "your slavery is over."

His tones were severe, and the child was frightened. She slipped from her seat at the table and stood pale and shrinkingly before him. "Sir, I want to go back to Mrs. Tingsby."

Titus came to the rescue. "But you haven't fed your mouse," he said, kindly, and with the cunning of one young thing in understanding another. "And we've got some prime German cheese. Higby—"

The old man went to the big mahogany sideboard and presently came back with some crumbs of cheese.

The little girl's thoughts were turned in a new direction. Putting her hand in her little bosom she drew out the marvelous handkerchief, produced the ghost of the mouse, fed it, and put it back again. Then Titus skillfully drew her toward his grandfather's study. "About eleven o'clock on Christmas morning we always have our presents in here."

It was a pretty sight to see them go down the hall—the dark boy and the pretty little white girl, so much younger than he.

The Judge followed closely behind them, and as they reached the study door and paused, he paused too.

The little girl had caught sight of Princess Sukey sitting on her basket. She stopped short, caught her breath, stepped close to Titus and remained motionless.

"W-w-what's the matter?" asked the boy, bluntly.

"O, hush," murmured the child, in an ecstasy, "don't speak, don't move, or she will vanish."

"I-i-indeed she won't—she is grandfather's bird."

"Then she is no ghost," said Bethany, drawing a long sigh of relief.

"Ghost, no. Watch her dance when I tickle her feet," and he stepped forward to the hearthrug.

The princess got out of her basket when she saw them coming and, bowing a great many times, said, "Rookety cahoo!"

"H-h-happy Christmas," replied Titus, politely; "lots of seeds and the best of health. Now dance for the little girl," and gently touching her claws he caused her to spin round and round.

Finally she flew over their heads to the Judge's shoulder.

"O, if I could touch her," said the child, and she shivered in the intensity of her emotion.

The Judge sat down and put the pigeon on the arm of his easy chair.

"Come here, little girl," he said, "and stroke her."

Bethany shyly approached and held out a forefinger to the Judge.

With another sharp pang at his heart he felt that the tiny finger was roughened by work. Then guiding it to the white head under the hood of feathers he looked away from the bird and out the window. God helping him, this child should never toil again.

When Bethany felt her hand touching the velvety feathers she gave a long shudder of delight.

After a time, when the princess had impatiently thrown off the little caressing finger, Bethany threw up her hands to the ceiling. "I have seen them in the street, I have called to them, but they never let me touch them. I think they thought I was a cat."

"W-w-what do you mean—pigeons?" asked Titus.

"Yes, birds—pretty birds of the air. I love them, but they don't love me. Only dogs, and cats, and rats, and mice love me."

"H-h-hello!" exclaimed Titus, "there goes eleven. N-n-now we'll have the presents."

The Judge rang the bell, and the servants, headed by Higby and Mrs. Blodgett, filed into the room.

Bethany's serious brown eyes took in every detail of the scene. The presentation of the good-sized parcels done up in white paper, the untying of

strings, the exclamations and expressions of gratitude, all belonged to a world that she had never entered before.

Fur-lined gloves, mufflers, fur capes, and warm dresses for the maids, a dressing-gown for Higby, beautifully bound books and a new watch for Titus, were all spread before the eyes of the astonished child, and she surveyed the various gifts without a suspicion of envy or jealousy. The Judge saw this by her transparent face, and with a gesture he told Titus to give her a small box of candy that lay unnoticed among his many presents.

The boy hastened to give it to her.

"For me," she ejaculated, her now pink face growing red, "for Bethany?"

"Y-y-yes, for Bethany," said the boy, good-humoredly.

"O, charm of novelty," reflected the Judge, and he looked round the room. He had as good a set of servants as there was in the city. They were as grateful as they could be to him for his kindly remembrance of them, but it was the gratitude of custom, of anticipation. They knew he would give them handsome presents; any other well-to-do and well disposed employer would have done the same, but this child—he looked at her again.

She was in a quiet rapture. "O, the cunning candies," she murmured, "each one in a little dress; O, the pretty pink flounces."

"Why don't you eat some?" inquired the Judge.

She touched them daintily with the tips of her fingers. "O, sir, I could not eat them. I shall keep them forever and ever and ever."

"But they will spoil; they were made to eat."

"Would you like one, sir?" she asked, anxiously.

"No, thank you."

She gazed seriously into the box and began to count one, two, three, four, and so on. "Sir," she said at last, "there are just enough to go twice round for Mrs. Tingsby's children and the boarders."

The Judge smiled. She was not a selfish child.

"I could spare one for the dear bird with the overcoat on and its collar turned up," she said, sweetly.

The Judge looked puzzled.

"S-s-she means Sukey," explained Titus.

"Thank you, little girl; pigeons do not eat candy."

"Then I think you had better take one," she said, shyly, coming toward him with the box outstretched in her hand.

O, sweet little childish face and childish grace!—and the judge's eyes grew moist. Once years and years ago God had given him two little daughters—two dream children, it seemed to him now, so many were the years that had passed since he laid the little childish forms away in a country churchyard. O, children, so long lamented, yet now almost forgotten.

"Little girl," he said, gently, "I once had two small daughters not as old as you."

Bethany looked over her shoulder, as if he were speaking of some one present.

"What do they look like?" she asked, wistfully. "Are their faces white like mine, and have they thin brown curls?"

"My child, they have been in their graves for many a day."

"But their ghosts," she said, with sweet impatience, "you see them, don't you?"

"Do you believe in ghosts?" asked the Judge, quietly.

Bethany pursed up her lips. "The air is quite, quite full of them, sir. Every night my mamma stands by the foot of my bed. Last night she waited so patiently until I was undressed. When I was all alone in the room she came forward, she sat down beside me, she put her hand on my forehead. She said, 'Little daughter, do not be lonely, I am with you.' Do not your little girls sit beside you at night?"

"No, dear," said the Judge, very gently.

"How queer," and Bethany gazed at him as if he were a new and strange kind of puzzle. Then she said, "Please tell me what they were like. Perhaps I will see them."

"What an imagination," murmured the Judge, then he said aloud, "Some other time, child."

Bethany possessed an extraordinary amount of tact for a child of her age, and instead of pursuing the subject she looked round the room. The servants were wrapping up their gifts preparatory to taking them away. Titus was deep in one of the volumes of travel his grandfather had given him.

"Sir," she said, suddenly turning to the Judge. "There are other ghosts besides children and mothers."

The Judge quietly bowed his head in token of acquiescence. He would indulge her humor.

"There is my mouse ghost," she said, touching her breast; "then there is the ghost of the spotted dog with yellow eyes."

"Indeed," remarked the Judge, highly amused and interested, "and who was the spotted dog?"

"He is a ghost," said the child, earnestly, "but he really isn't dead. He ran away. I can see him as plain as I see these candies," and she tightly shut her eyes for a few instants.

Suddenly opening them, she exclaimed, "There he is, running with a bone—quick! catch him. I should like to tell him that Bethany still loves him."

As she spoke she started dramatically forward and extended her hands.

"W-w-what's the matter?" asked Titus, lifting his head.

"My spotted dog," she cried; "my dear spotted dog. Take care that he doesn't bite your clothes. He is a very peculiar dog."

The servants in alarm thought that a real dog had entered the room by the open door and began to tumble over each other.

Higby, on account of his infirmity of tongue, tried to open his mouth as little as possible in the presence of his employer, but now in his fright he called out, "W-w-where is the d-d-dog?"

"There," exclaimed the little girl, "right between your feet. Do catch him for me, but take care, for he hates old men, and might give your coat a snap."

Higby caught his foot in his highly prized dressing gown that he was carrying across his arm and stumbled against Titus's heap of books. He sent

them flying; then, to recover himself he clutched one of the maids, who shrieked with fright.

The Judge carefully examined the child's face. Had she called up the spotted dog in a spirit of mischief? No, for there were tears in her eyes.

"You have frightened him away," she said, sadly. "He has run outdoors. He may never come back," and, sitting down, she buried her little face in her hands.

Higby tumbled out of the room. He believed that the spotted dog was there yet, hidden in some corner and waiting to bite him.

CHAPTER VI

IN THE PIGEON LOFT

AFTER lunch at half-past one, the Judge went to his study for a nap, but he could not sleep.

The face of the strange child was ever before him. He wondered what she was doing. Titus had taken her up to the attic to see his old toys and to choose some for herself. He would like to watch her expression as Titus exhibited his cast-off playthings. For her that attic would be a kind of treasure-house.

How like a mirror her face was, how different from his, even from Titus's, for the boy, young as he was, had learned to conceal his emotions; and now what was he going to do with her?

With a sigh he got up, went into the hall and downstairs, put on a fur-lined coat and a fur cap, and was just about to go out when the two children came down the staircase, Titus not running as usual, but soberly walking beside his little companion.

Bethany's eyes were shining. She had a clown doll under one arm, a trumpet under the other, and her hands were full of games—toy-dogs and horses, a Noah's ark, and a little cart.

Titus had a bag slung on his back.

"G-g-grandfather," he said, "I suppose it's all right to give these things to the Tingsby children."

"Certainly."

"H-h-how will I get them there? Are you going to have the sleigh out to-day?"

"I was not planning to do so. I am going to walk."

"L-l-let's take the young one for a drive," exclaimed Titus.

Judge Sancroft smiled. Titus ordinarily hated to drive. He did not care to sit still for any length of time.

"Very well," he said at length.

"I-I-I was just going to take her up to the stable to see the pigeons," said Titus. "S-s-she's so crazy about birds."

"Then tell Roblee to harness, and remember not to keep me waiting. Don't take the child outdoors in that garb."

"I-I-I don't know what to put on her," said Titus, in a puzzled way. "S-s-she can't put her old dirty coat over that white rig."

The Judge opened the hall closet. "Let us see what we have here."

Titus came forward and, rummaging in drawers and on hooks, brought out a small cap.

"H-h-here, child, try this on."

Bethany carefully put her toys on the floor and obediently held up her head.

The cap was several sizes too large, but she did not complain, only quietly pushed it to the back of her head.

"Here is a scarf," said the Judge, "wrap that round your neck."

Bethany did as she was told, and Titus next brought out a short coat of his own.

"I-i-it's worlds too large," he observed, "but it will keep her warm."

"What about her feet?" inquired the Judge.

"W-w-well, here's a big shawl," stammered Titus, bringing out a traveling rug. "I guess we'll just wrap that round her after she gets in the sleigh."

"It will cover all deficiencies," said the Judge, "but how will you get her up to the stable in those thin slippers?"

Titus emerged from the closet and surveyed Bethany with a face flushed from exertion. "I guess I'll have to carry her up. It isn't far. Once there she'll be warm enough."

The Judge smiled and followed slowly as the two went down another staircase and opened a door leading to a back veranda. From there a plank walk led through the garden to the stable.

Titus manfully shouldered his burden on the veranda.

Bethany clasped her arms about his neck and smiled back at the Judge, who caught up to them at the stable door.

There was a furnace in the stable, and the air was warm and comfortable, so Titus allowed Bethany to slip to the floor.

"Is this where your horses live?" she asked, shyly, looking up at the Judge.

He nodded his head.

She continued to look about her. "I wish Mother Tingsby had been born a horse; it would be better for her."

The Judge wrinkled his forehead. Poor child—she, too, was grappling with the mystery of the inequality of the human lot.

"W-w-well," said Titus, hurrying back from the stalls where he had been to speak to Roblee. "T-t-the sleigh will be at the door in twenty minutes. N-n-now let us go up to see the pigeons," and he led the way toward a flight of steps.

Bethany tripped behind, occasionally extricating a hand from the long sleeve of Titus's coat to push back on her head the capacious cap, which persisted in falling over her brows.

Titus, with Charlie Brown's help, had had a fine place made for his pigeons. His grandfather had allowed him to have a part of the hay loft inclosed, some extra windows put in, and a floor of matched pine laid.

"There isn't a better loft in the city," Charlie had said when it was finished.

Clean, coarse sand had been put on the floor, movable nest compartments had been placed against the wall, and the latest things in feed hoppers and drinking fountains had been bought for the boy.

He was full of joy over his new possession, and, as Mrs. Blodgett prophesied, most of his leisure time was spent here, either alone or in company with other boys.

He did all the work himself, and with a worthy pride in the clean home of his birds he stood at the top of the steps and eagerly waited to hear what the little girl would say.

Bethany came up the steps, walked through the screen door that Titus held open, and looked about her.

It was the middle of the afternoon, and in view of the fast approaching darkness the pigeons were

bestirring themselves in order to have their last feed before going to bed. They were all promenading over the sanded floor, going from one rack to another looking for the choicest grains.

They made a very pretty picture in the gloaming. Titus had not as many varieties as his friend Charlie had, but still he had a goodly number. There were dark Jacobins, with nodding red hoods surrounding their white faces; pure white Jacobins and buff Jacobins; clean-shaped, slender magpies; graceful archangels; shell-crested, nasal tufted priests; cobby frill-backs with reversed feathering; swallows; tumblers; runts; demure nuns in black and white costumes with white hoods passing below their side curls; and globular cropped poulters.

Bethany surveyed them in profound silence. The Judge, striving to read her face, could make nothing of it but confusion.

Finally he put out a hand to steady her. The child was swaying.

"Do you feel ill?" he asked, gazing apprehensively at her deathly white face.

She nodded. "Yes, sir, Bethany feels sick."

He took her in his arms and carried her downstairs, and the discomfited Titus, after a farewell glance at his beautiful birds, followed disconsolately behind. He had so hoped that the little girl would like them. She had seemed to like Princess Sukey. Well, girls were queer. Boys were much more satisfactory.

"What is the matter with you?" asked the Judge when he had set Bethany on her feet.

"Sir," she said, in a whisper and looking up at

him with an awed face, "Was it heaven or were they ghosts?"

The Judge tried to do some thinking. It was hard for a man of his age to send himself back to childhood—and then he had not been an imaginative child. But he tried to think of himself as highly strung, as having a passion for dumb creatures, as being poor and unable to have pets about him, and then suddenly to be confronted with a number of beautiful specimens of the bird world.

Yes, he could just faintly picture to himself something of Bethany's ecstasy. The child had been overcome.

"Don't you want to go in the house and lie down?" he asked, gazing kindly at her white face.

"Yes, sir," she whispered. The Judge carried her along the plank walk, while Titus lounged slowly behind.

"Where is Mrs. Blodgett?" asked the Judge of a maid when they entered the lower hall.

"Gone out, sir."

"Then you take care of this little girl while I am away."

Bethany made no protest. The girl smiled kindly and put out a hand, and the child went quietly with her.

"Let her lie down and have a sleep," said the Judge, "she is tired."

Then he turned. "Well, boy, what are you for—remaining at home or going with me?"

Titus looked at his grandfather. It was Christmas Day, and he ought to keep with him. "I'll go with you, sir," he said, brightening up.

The Judge smiled, then together they went upstairs and out the big hall door down to the waiting sleigh.

Higby carried out the toys for the Tingsby children and tucked them under the fur robes.

It did not take long for the Judge's fast horses to reach River Street.

The street was very quiet. It was a cold day, and the people were mostly celebrating their Christmas indoors.

"P-p-pretty poor pickings, I guess, some of them have," stuttered Titus, compassionately, and his grandfather agreed with him.

Mrs. Tingsby's house was as gray and dingy outside by daylight as it had been by electric light the day before, and it was apparently cold and uninhabited. No children's faces appeared at the windows, no cheerful gleam of firelight shone from between the threadbare curtains.

Titus jumped out and pounded on the door. After a long time, and a liberal application of both fists, Mrs. Tingsby herself came.

She gave them a most joyful welcome.

"Come in! Come in!" she screamed in her excitement, "come in, gentlemen, come in an' come down to where we're celebratin', poor as we be. No, no—not there," as the Judge mechanically turned toward the door of the small room in which they had sat the evening before. "Here, sir, down here in the cellar," and she trotted before him to a dark stairway, and with alarming celerity disappeared in the depths of a basement, while the Judge and Titus felt their way down after her.

"Here, here," she called, opening a door and suddenly allowing a streak of light to dart into the almost pitch-dark hall, "here we be—merry as coppersmiths after our good dinner."

"S-s-seems to me I'd rather be some other kind of a smith," grumbled Titus to himself, wrinkling his nose in the goose-laden atmosphere as he followed her, for he was preceding his grandfather, with the charitable intention of breaking his fall if he had one.

"Merry, merry—O! so merry," repeated the little woman. "Here we be—all the family."

Titus stood aside and blinked his eyes, while the Judge walked by him.

"For warmth, sir, an' comfort, an' good times, we're all in the kitchen," said Mrs. Tingsby. "Gen'l'men," and she turned to her boarders with a ridiculous little bow, "this is the jedge that tooked Bethany. Jedge, here be my children," and she indicated half a dozen poorly dressed but bright looking children who got up from the floor and from cracker boxes to make their best bow to the company.

"Yes, we be all here," exclaimed Mrs. Tingsby, a-huggin' the fire, "which is a good one if I does say so myself. There's Harry Ray, the express boy, Harry an' his cough, which I'm glad to say is a mite better owin' to peppermint tea or his half holiday, I don't know which; Matthew Jones an' his poor eyes, but he aint grumblin', because it's Christmas; an' old man Fanley, glad to rest his weary legs from parcel-carryin'—aint you, Fanley. An' Barry Maferty, which is a temp'rary boarder."

The Judge looked round him. From the bottom

of his heart he pitied them. At first sight it seemed to him the height of misery to be crouching round a medium-sized fire, breathing an atmosphere so redolent of goose, with no comfortable seats; and yet in a few minutes he modified his opinion.

Two of the few chairs in the kitchen had been given to him and to Titus. As they sat in the shabby but clean kitchen he reflected that it was warm, that these people all looked contented, that with their dingy clothes they would certainly not be happy in rooms like his own.

"It is very comfortable here," he said, drawing off his gloves and rubbing his hands, "very comfortable after the cold outside."

"If only the landlords would give the poor better houses," he continued, reflecting, "they would not be so uncomfortable. Really, they are spared some of the worries of life that we better off ones have to endure."

But he must listen to Mrs. Tingsby. "We've had such a good Christmas," she was exclaiming, "such a good one. Look-a-here, an' here," and she took from one child a tiny doll, from another a bag of candy, from another a whistle, and proudly exhibited them.

Needless to say, the presents were from the boarders, who somewhat sheepishly averted their faces while she was praising their generosity to the Judge.

He was greatly touched. They were so pitiful, so insignificant, these little presents, and yet how they had pleased the recipients.

"An' now," called Mrs. Tingsby, "may I be for-

given for not havin' put her first—how is that blessed child?"

The Judge's lips formed the words, "Very well."

"Aint she a darlin'! O, you'll get to love her like your own flesh an' blood."

"I am sorry that she is not a boy," vociferated the Judge; "a boy would have been more of a companion for my grandson."

"Yes, sir—yes, sir," said Mrs. Tingsby, beaming on him, "a boy an' a girl—just a nice family. I always did despise two boys or two girls for a set piece."

"You tell her," said the Judge, with a wave of his hand toward his grandson.

Titus approached his lips somewhat nearer to the little woman's ear than they were. "M-m-my grandfather says he is sorry the girl is not a boy."

"Boy!" repeated Mrs. Tingsby, "O, yes, she should have been a boy. They do get on easier than girls, but we can't change her now, you know."

The semicircle of boarders, children, and the Judge could not but agree with this statement, and she looked approvingly round at them.

"Tell her that even though we do not keep the child, we shall still be interested in her," said the Judge.

Titus, in slight embarrassment, again cried in her ear, "Maybe we can get her a good home somewhere else."

"Good home!" replied Mrs. Tingsby, "yes, yes, I know—the Lord will bless you for that."

"I guess your mamma is pretty deaf to-day, isn't

she?" asked Titus, patiently, of one of the older children.

The children were all staring rather disdainfully at him and his grandfather. They did not lack smartness, and they had jumped to the conclusion that the Judge's visit meant that he was tired of Bethany and wanted to return her.

"I'll make her hear," said the eldest girl, grimly, and she applied her lips to her parent's ear, and, without making a steam whistle of herself, as poor Titus did, she said, in a low, blood-curdling tone, "The gemman is tired of Bethany—wants to return her like a parcel sent on approbation."

Mrs. Tingsby, who had more of the milk of human kindness than this particular one of her offspring, turned to the Judge with an amazed, reproachful air. "Be that true, sir?"

"No," said the Judge, stoutly, "it isn't."

Immediately there ensued an altercation between him and the smart girl. To his own great confusion and astonishment, he, Judge Sancroft, leading citizen of Riverport, actually found himself bandying words with a saucy little shopgirl, for such she appeared to be—and she got the better of him.

At last he appealed to the boarders. "Can't some of you explain how matters are? The child is a charming little creature. I have no wish to bring her back. I will see that she is comfortably placed."

The new temporary boarder, or visitor, Barry Mafferty, suddenly began to laugh. The old boarders, at the entrance of the Judge, had been suddenly stricken with bashfulness. This poorly dressed, brown-faced man of middle age had alone preserved

his composure. After a slight bow he had taken an unlighted cigarette from his mouth, had calmly looked the Judge over, from his white head to his black overshoes, had bestowed a slight glance of admiration on the half-open, fur-lined coat, and had then again directed his attention to the red-hot bars of the grate in front of the old-fashioned cooking-stove.

Now, as if irresistibly amused by the passage-at-arms between the gentleman and the flippant child of poverty, he did not try to conceal his amusement.

The Judge turned to him.

"Don't worry yourself, sir," said Mafferty, easily, "things will all come out right. Our hostess is a good sort."

The Judge stared. Who was this man?

"Broken down gentleman," said Mafferty, still more easily; "lot's of time to study human nature. I have seen the child you took. I advise you to hold on to her if you value a nice child. She belongs to a different rank in society from these—" and he raised his hand comprehensively at the Tingsby children.

The smart girl immediately turned her attention upon him.

"Easy now, easy," he said, coolly, nodding his really fine-featured head at her. "Easy, or you will upset your basket of china."

"China," she cried, in a fine, thin voice, curiously like her mother's, "what do you know of china, you low-down, gutter-raggy, broken-weazled, shilly-shally—"

Mafferty began to laugh again, and such is the

power of a long drawn-out, hearty, sustained peal of laughter in which there is nothing nervous, nothing satirical, nothing to wound, that one by one his listeners began to join him.

The Judge laughed, Titus laughed, the boarders giggled, the children shrieked, and even Mrs. Tingsby, though she had not heard a word of what was said, laughed with the best of them, and was soon wiping the tears from her eyes.

"I don't know what's amusin' you," she gasped, convulsively, "but it must be somethin' powerful funny."

At this Mafferty redoubled his own merriment, and presently the uproar became so loud that the Judge rose. He really could not take part in this any longer, though he was still laughing himself.

Mafferty paid no attention to him. His eye was on the smart girl. She alone of all the children had not once allowed a crease of amusement to form itself on her face. She was stubborn, disagreeable, even ugly.

"Laugh, you goose, laugh," he suddenly cried, stopping short and snapping his fingers within an inch of her nose. "If you don't learn to laugh the devil will catch you. You can't go through life kicking at Providence and have any sort of a good time."

The girl drew herself back and began an hysterical giggle.

"Not bad to start with," said the man, complacently. "I'll teach you to laugh better than that, though, you insolent wisp of humanity."

The Judge again stared at him. He was curiously attracted by this man.

"Have you been on the stage?" he asked, suddenly.

"Yes, sir," said Mafferty, good-humoredly, "the stage of the world. First as a physician, then down, down through various stages of trampdom. Great at deceivin' farmers' wives. Now imposing on society as proprietor of a cat farm."

"O, you are out at Bobbety's Island?"

"Yes, sir."

"How can you leave your cats?"

"My wife is there, sir. I've come up to the city to spend Christmas."

"What about your wife?"

"O, sir, women can enjoy the pleasures of solitude better than men, and, then, she is fond of the cats."

The Judge looked disapprovingly at him, then saying, "We must go," he made a sign of farewell to Mrs. Tingsby.

"Beat him," said Mafferty, nodding at Titus, "if he doesn't work. Don't let him idle if you half kill him. The devil's real name is 'Loafer.'"

The Judge nodded significantly, and all the boarders and children stood up as he left the kitchen.

"By the way," he said, turning suddenly, "the little girl sent some toys to you children."

"Hooray!" cried the boys and girls, who were still hilarious—that is, all but the eldest, smart girl. Then they pressed out of the kitchen after Titus, who volunteered to show them where the toys were.

The Judge stood looking at Mrs. Tingsby. He was sorry for her. She did not quite take in the situation of affairs, and was troubled and anxious.

He turned to Mafferty as the one who would best understand him.

"Explain to her, will you?" he said. "I have no intention of again placing the child on her hands. I cannot keep her myself, as she is not a boy, but I shall find a suitable home for her."

"Yes, I will," said the man, then he put out a hand and touched the Judge's coat almost lovingly. "I once had a fur-lined coat. I suppose you haven't another?"

"Yes, I have," said the Judge, promptly, "too small for me—just your fit."

Mafferty smiled. He knew he would get it. The Judge gave a great sigh of relief as he passed up the dark staircase. He had grown strangely sensitive this Christmas season. It had seemed to him that he could not go away comfortably and leave this man Mafferty without doing something for him. True, he had not half the respect for him that he had for the honest expressman, the furrier, and the parcel-carrier standing modestly in the background. Those men would have died rather than beg from him. They were workers, and Mafferty had been, and evidently still was, a kind of drone. Yet the cat-man was of the Judge's class. They understood each other's Shibboleth, and the rich man's heart was full of pity as he went out to the frosty street.

Roblee had sprung out of his sleigh and had gone to the horses' heads.

There was such a screaming and pulling from the young Tingsbys, who were dragging at the toys and bearing them to the house, that he was afraid of a

runaway. Titus, scarcely less excited than the poor children, was in the thickest of the fun.

"Come! Come!" said the Judge, "stop this tumult," and he waved his hand.

Titus hurried the shrieking crew into the house and sprang in beside his grandfather.

"Home, Roblee," said the Judge, and in a few minutes they were before the big stone house on Grand Avenue.

They were met by a disturbed household. Higby, after throwing open the door, stammered and walked backward, and stamped, and tried to ejaculate something, which was drowned by the exclamations of the maidservants, who had assembled in the hall. Foremost among them was Betty, the girl into whose care the Judge had put little Bethany.

Her face was as white as death, and she was wringing her hands. Presently the Judge made out her exclamation, "Child lost!"

"The little girl, do you mean?" he asked, sternly.

"Yes, sir; O! yes, sir."

"When?"

"Just after you left, sir."

"Where were you?"

"In my own room. I had laid her on the bed to go to sleep—she went off like that, sir," and she helplessly extended her arms.

"Were you in your room when she disappeared?"

"No, sir; O! no, sir. I was next door to Jennie's room. I just went in to borrow a fine needle."

"And when you came back the child was gone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you searched the house?"

"Every corner, sir."

"Did you run out in the street?"

"Yes, sir; we've been searching the neighborhood for an hour. We were just waiting now till you came."

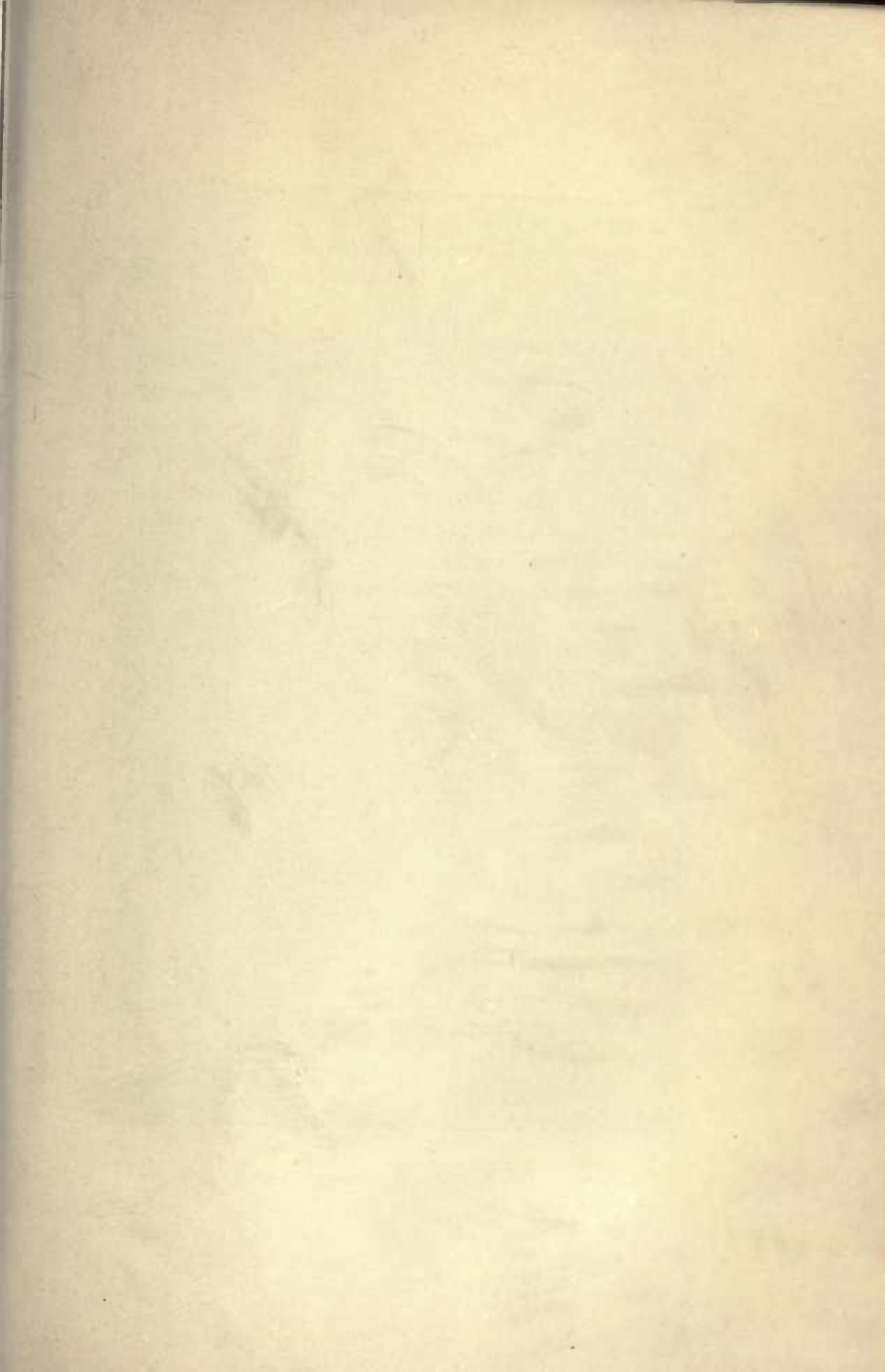
The Judge stood stock still in the midst of his apprehensive domestics. Had the little stranger run home?

Probably, and yet—he reflected for a minute, his face heavy with what the young lawyers of Riverport were pleased to call his "judicial frown."

Suddenly he lifted up his head. "Have you searched the stable?"

"The stable—no, sir," ejaculated poor Betty.

"Come with me, Titus," said the Judge, "that child is a peculiar one. I do not think that she has run away."





“Go tell the servants that she is found,” said the Judge
to Titus.

CHAPTER VII

BIRDS OF HEAVEN

THE Judge walked calmly out through the house to the garden and through the garden to the stable.

Arrived in the stable, he called to Roblee, who was unharnessing, to turn on all the electric lights above and below. Then he and Titus went up to the pigeon loft.

The Judge pushed open the screen door. It was just as he had thought. On a little stool by the door sat Bethany sound asleep, a white owl pigeon in her lap, another on her head. Her own head was thrown back against the wall, one hand resting caressingly on the beautiful creature in her lap.

The owls opened wide their large eyes and gazed at the Judge and Titus in mild surprise. Other pigeons eyed them from nest boxes and perches. They were all very tame, but not all would have allowed Bethany to handle them as did the gentle owls.

"Go tell the servants that she is found," said the Judge to Titus.

The boy rushed down the steps, and the Judge bent over Bethany. She had no wrap on, and the pigeon loft was not kept very warm.

He looked at a thermometer over her head—fifty degrees.

"Child," he said, gently shaking her, "wake up."

She drowsily opened her eyes and murmured, "Birds of heaven."

The Judge shook her again. "Come! Come! Don't you want some Christmas dinner?"

She staggered to her little feet. "O! is it you, Mr. Judge! I was dreaming of you and the birds."

The Judge smiled, took her hand, and conducted her down the steps, then carried her in the house. Upon arriving inside they found Mrs. Blodgett, who had just come from her midday Christmas dinner, eaten at her daughter's. She had been overwhelming the unfortunate Betty with reproaches. If she, Mrs. Blodgett, had been at home the child would not have been allowed to steal away and give everyone such an upsetting—just like a careless, giddy girl, and she swept away the little child to make her toilet for dinner.

From her store of clothes she managed to unearth another dress of the grandchild Mary Ann's, for Bethany appeared at the dinner table in pale blue.

Very pretty she looked as she came gently into the dining room and allowed old Higby to lift her to a seat beside the Judge.

The table was decorated with holly and red ribbons and a miniature Christmas tree.

Bethany's eyes shone brightly. At last she was wide awake, having had sleep enough to last her for some time.

She said nothing, but her appreciation of her gay and brilliant surroundings was so intense that, to the secret amusement of the Judge and Titus, she made up her mind to have a participator—some one who was not used to this style of living. Instead of

waiting for the end of the meal she put up her hand at once, drew out the ghost of the dead mouse, and placed him behind a sprig of holly. All through the meal, from soup to fruit, mousie had his share of what was going. Not a course did he miss, and it was a very stuffed and overcome ghost that the child finally wrapped in her handkerchief when they left the table.

The big parlor was lighted, the piano was open, and picture books and games were laid out, but in some way or other the trio, after dinner, drifted to the Judge's study. There on the hearthrug by the fire, with Princess Sukey, the two children, or, rather, the boy and the child, sat and talked, while the Judge listened quietly from his armchair. Part of the time Titus was shouting with laughter. In some marvelous way he had got over all his bashfulness of the morning. Bethany was such a little girl that it did not seem worth while to be afraid of her, and then he was in honor bound to tell her about their visit to the Tingsbys.

Airy, she said, was the name of the eldest girl. Airy, nickname for Mary, then came Annie, Rodd, Goldie, Gibb, and Dobbie.

"W-w-what's Dobbie?" inquired Titus, "boy or girl?"

"Why, boy, of course," responded Bethany, "didn't you see him?"

"Y-y-yes, I saw a baby sitting on the floor, but I didn't know which name belonged to him."

"Then you had to think a name to him," said Bethany, dreamily.

"T-t-think a name—what's that?"

"Why, you know that everything has a name," said the little girl, staring at him wonderingly. "There isn't any 'it' about anything. If you don't know the name, you just give one."

"O-o-of course, everything has a name," said the boy, stoutly, "but if I don't know it I don't give one. I wait till I find out."

"I don't," she replied, shaking her head. "I give a name to everything."

"Did you give me a name before you heard mine?"

"Of course," she replied, with dignity.

"W-w-what name did you give me?"

"You won't be cross?" she said, surveying him doubtfully.

"C-c-certainly not."

"I gave you the name of Blackie," she said, with a glance up at his dark head.

Titus burst into a fit of laughter. "Y-y-you did that last night when you were so sleepy?"

Bethany nodded her head. "I wasn't too sleepy to think."

"A-a-and now—what do you give me now?"

"I give you your own name," she said, patiently, "but the other one is in the top of my mind. I could call it down if I wanted to."

"W-w-would you give this hearthrug a name?" asked the boy, teasingly.

She caressingly passed a hand over the red velvet pile. "Yes, boy, I call this rug Red Heart."

Titus did not laugh this time. He stared curiously and silently at her.

The Judge interposed a quiet question. "Did you

think me a name before you knew my real one, little girl?"

"Yes, sir," she said, shyly, turning round to face him.

"What was it?"

"I called you Mr. White Tree because your white hair is so soft, just like the blossoms on a little tree in the flower shop on Broadway."

"Do you call me by that name, now?" pursued the Judge, curiously.

"No, sir."

"What do you call me?"

She hung her head and twisted her fingers together. "Bethany would rather not speak that name out loud," she said, in a low voice.

"It isn't Judge Sancroft, then," ventured her senior, kindly.

She shook her head.

"W-w-whisper it," proposed Titus, bluntly. "I've seen girls whisper things when they would not speak them out."

She mumbled something to herself that the boy could not hear.

"G-g-go say it in his ear," stuttered Titus, impatiently.

Bethany looked shyly at the Judge.

"Come, if you want to," he said, with a smile.

She edged up to him step by step. "It's Daddy Grandpa," she whispered in his ear.

"Why Daddy Grandpa?" he whispered back.

"'Cause Bethany hasn't any daddy and she hasn't any grandpa, and she likes to call you that."

The Judge had noticed before that in moments of

great embarrassment Bethany often spoke of herself in the third person, therefore he hastened to reassure her.

"You may call me that name all the time, dear child, if it will be any comfort to you."

A strange glow came over her face, apart from the glow of the firelight. Poor little lonely heart, craving for natural relationship and sympathy! However, she had been schooled to restrain emotion, and with a simple "Thank you, sir," she went back to the hearthrug.

"S-s-sir," remarked Titus, "it's getting pretty hot here, and that pigeon is just roasting herself."

The Judge wrinkled his eyebrows. "It is most unfortunate that that bird has contracted the habit of sitting by the fire—most abnormal, most abnormal. Open the window and see whether she will go out on the balcony."

Bethany, who had been sitting as close as possible to Sukey's basket, silently adoring her, moved back, and Titus got up and went to a window.

"C-c-come, Sukey."

The pigeon understood him perfectly well, and, stepping out of her basket, she walked round and round in a state of great indignation. "Rookety cahoo! rookety cahoo!"

"Let her alone, boy," said the Judge, "she won't go out to-night, it is too cold. If we insist, she will stand outside and tap on the window until our nerves are upset. There, close the window. You have cooled the room. We will keep doing that, in order that we may not suffer from the heat."

Titus concealed a smile as he looked out into the

cold night. What a change had come over his grandfather. Who would have imagined last Christmas that this Christmas he would have a pet pigeon in his study?

"And now you had better go to bed, children," said the Judge, as the big hall clock struck ten. "Have you had a nice Christmas, little girl?"

Bethany went and stood beside his armchair. "Sir, it is the best Christmas I ever had. I shall tell my mamma about it to-night."

The Judge said nothing, but held out a hand to her.

She clasped his large fingers tightly in her tiny ones. "Good-night, sir—may I say the name?"

"O, yes—decidedly."

"Daddy Grandpa," she murmured, "good-night, Daddy Grandpa. Now Bethany is like other little girls. She isn't all alone in the world, like a poor stray cat."

The Judge stared dreamily into the fire. What a strange child! He must take the greatest pains to find a home suitable for her in every respect.

CHAPTER VIII

TO ADOPT OR NOT TO ADOPT

"ARE you going out?" asked Bethany, wistfully, of the Judge the next morning.

She had breakfasted with the Judge. She had disappeared afterward to visit the pigeon loft with Titus, and then when he left the house to call on his friend Charlie she had gone to the Judge's study to play with Sukey. Now she stood regretfully watching him button on his overcoat.

"Yes, I am," he replied. "I have a call to make; would you like to go with me?" he asked, as an afterthought.

Her little face beamed. That was just what she wanted.

"But you haven't any wraps," said the Judge. "However, I can bundle you up in something, and Roblee will drive us to Furst Brothers. There we will find everything under one roof. Here you are," and, laughing like a boy, he smothered her up in the fur coat that he intended to give Mafferty and carried her out to the sleigh.

A quiet-living man, a man of simple pleasures, one who rarely experienced new sensations, the trip through Furst Brothers' establishment was as full of interest to the Judge as a voyage of exploration would have been to another man.

First they visited the fur department, where Beth-

any stood in rapt silence, with shining eyes which she sometimes tightly closed, and then suddenly opened to make sure that it was not all a dream, while an obsequious shopwoman tried on one little coat after another.

The Judge's choice finally fell on a white one with a cap to match, and Bethany was clad in it. The Judge directed the woman to let the coat hang open, as the store was very warm. The little cap was put on, however, and, tightly holding his hand and occasionally glancing down to smooth the pretty blue satin lining, Bethany walked as if in a trance to the shoe department.

There she was fitted with several pairs of shoes and slippers. Finally rubbers were slipped on and a pair of warm, black, woolen gaiters buttoned over them. Then gloves were chosen, and back they went to the fur department to buy a little muff which the Judge had forgotten.

"As for dresses and undergarments," he said to Bethany, "Mrs. Blodgett must bring you here. Now we will go to see my friend."

When they were again seated in the sleigh, and Bethany, with a bright pink spot on each cheek, sat holding her hands tightly clasped in her muff, the Judge said, "Did you ever hear of Mrs. Tom Everest while you were living on River Street?"

The child shook her head.

"No; you would not. Well, I must tell you that she is a very charming and philanthropic young woman, the granddaughter of a once eminent jurist of this city."

Bethany had very little idea of what her compan-

ion meant, but she enjoyed being talked to as if she were a young lady, and she gravely bent her head and said, "Yes, sir."

"Her grandfather was a much older man than I am, but I well remember him and his admirable wife, now also dead. Unfortunately, some time after his death the family lost their money and went to River Street to live. This girl Berty, or, rather, Mrs. Tom Everest, became greatly interested in the poor people about her, and when she married she persuaded her husband to come and live with her instead of moving to another part of the city. They seem to be quite happy, and are doing much good. I am going to see her to ask if she knows of any nice family where you would have young children to play with and be kindly treated."

"Me, sir?" ejaculated Bethany, faintly.

"Yes; my house is not a suitable place for you. You see, I thought you were a boy when I brought you home."

"A boy, sir?" said Bethany, still more faintly. "O, yes, I remember."

"I wanted a companion for my grandson."

"I like boys, sir," murmured the little girl, weakly.

The Judge looked sharply down at her. The lovely color had faded from her face. Large tears were rolling down her cheeks.

"You have surely not got attached to us in this short time," he said, wonderingly.

"It doesn't take much to keep me, sir," said Bethany, desperately. "I've been trying not to eat too much—and mousie could get on with less. And I

can work, sir. Lots of times I've scrubbed down the stairs for Mrs. Tingsby."

The Judge made some kind of a noise in his throat and looked over the shoulder farthest away from Bethany.

They were gliding swiftly through Broadway. O! the exquisite, clear, cold air and the lovely sunshine. How good it was to be alive, even if one were sixty-two; and he had just been stabbing this faithful little heart beside him. But, pshaw! Nonsense! A child of seven formed no strong attachments in a day. If he sent her away she would cling as closely to a kind stranger as she now apparently did to him.

But Bethany was talking, very weakly and brokenly, but still talking, and he must listen.

"Sir," she murmured, "I could take care of the birds—those beautiful birds, and if there was not room in the house I could sleep in that lovely loft. I would not be nervous and cry, or make any noise to disturb the horses. Only once in a while, when you were out, I would like to creep in the house to see that little saint with the hood on."

The little saint was Sukey, and the Judge smiled.

"Which do you love the best?" he said, sharply, "me and my grandson or the pigeons?"

"The pigeons, sir," she said, simply. "But before my mamma died she said, 'Bethany, when you grow up you will love human beings better than the animals and the birds.'"

"Then why did you not stay at home with the birds this morning instead of coming with me? You wanted to come, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir. I don't know what made me want to come, but when I heard you putting on your coat I left the lovely bird and ran in the hall. It seemed as if I would be lonely without you."

The Judge smiled, a somewhat puzzled smile, and did not speak until Roblee drew up in front of a large, old-fashioned, smartly painted house on River Street, and said, "Mrs. Everest's, sir."

The Judge started, then he turned to Bethany. "Do you want to come in with me?"

"I-I don't just feel like it, sir," she said, hesitatingly, and the Judge saw that her cast-down face was again wet with tears.

"I will not be long," he said, kindly, and he rang the bell.

"Yes, Mrs. Everest was at home," a trim little maidservant informed him, and she ushered him into a large room on the ground floor.

The painted floor of the room had only one rug, on which a fat baby was sprawling. A wire screen before a blazing fire kept in sparks and prevented the possibility of baby's hands being burnt, or, possibly, baby's precious body, for he was alone for the moment.

Between partly open sliding doors the Judge saw in a second large room an enormous Christmas tree loaded with gifts.

The air of the house was sweet and wholesome. Looking beyond the Christmas tree, and through long windows which appeared to be old-fashioned ones made larger, the Judge had a magnificent view of the river.

"It is possible to be comfortable even on River

Street," he said, standing with his back to the fire and obligingly giving one foot to the baby, who was begging frantically for it.

"Good morning, good morning," said a sudden gay voice, and a half-girlish, half-womanly figure entered the room and took both the Judge's outstretched hands in her own. "The very best of Christmas blessings on you!"

"And on you," he said, heartily, "for you deserve them if anyone does."

"Hush, hush," she protested, blushing, then motioning him to the most comfortable of the many comfortable chairs in the room she took the roly-poly baby on her lap.

"What do you think of Tom, junior? Isn't he immense? You naughty baby, your mouth is black again. He begs like a little dog for everybody's feet—licks the blacking off. Just imagine! Now, Judge, do you think there is anything servile about me or Tom?"

"No, I don't."

"Well, this baby is an absolute lackey. Cringes and crawls to everyone—hasn't the spirit of a mouse. Fancy liking blacking and coal. You young rogue!" and she shook him till the baby laughed in glee.

"He is a fine child," said the Judge, "the picture of health. And now I must not take up your time, for I know you are a very busy person. You may know, or may not know, that for some time I have been looking for an orphan boy to adopt."

Mrs. Everest nodded her pretty black head. "Yes, I know."

"I didn't apply to you," said her caller, "because

I know your tender heart. You occupy yourself mostly with the very poor. I wanted a boy of some respectability."

"Exactly. Baby, stop licking my belt. Did you ever see such a child?"

"On Christmas Eve, just two days ago," continued the Judge, "I happened to stumble on a child that I thought was a boy, but perhaps you know about it," for Mrs. Everest was laughing heartily.

"O, yes; River Street knows what River Street does."

"Then I can omit that part. You know Mrs. Tingsby?"

"O, yes—know her and esteem her. She is a little shy of me because she is so respectable and so self-supporting. She doesn't want me to help her. She thinks she would lose prestige as a boarding-house keeper. Mafferty—Barry Mafferty, who runs our cat farm—was in last evening. He gave a glowing account of your visit to Mrs. Tingsby. I wish you could hear the nice things he says about you."

"Has he gone back to his farm?" asked the Judge.

"Yes, we persuaded him to go this morning. He gets terribly bored on the Island, and comes up occasionally to stay for a day or two at Mrs. Tingsby's. Then Tom and I have to watch him to see that he does not get into the saloons."

"I promised him a fur coat," said the Judge.

"So he told me. If you leave it here I will see that he gets it."

"Well," said the Judge, "to come back to my

affair. I don't want to keep this little girl. I want to find a good home for her, where her sensitive nature will be taken into account. I thought perhaps you would know of such a home."

"Does she want to leave you?" asked Mrs. Everest, quickly.

"Well, no," said the Judge, honestly, "I don't think she does, neither did she want to leave Mrs. Tingsby to come to me. Children are fickle."

The pretty girl-woman shook her head. "Mrs. Tingsby's was different. The child had been brought up to believe that some day she would know something better. You should have seen her mother. She was an exquisite creature. Pale, and cold, and quiet, and shy, and aristocratic, and making friends only with Mrs. Tingsby. I, in vain, tried to get acquainted with her."

"Did you know that Mrs. Tingsby allowed the child to work at making paper boxes?" asked the Judge.

"No," said Mrs. Everest, quickly. "She would not dare to have that get to my ears. Do you know this to be true?"

"Yes; the child was staggering home when I found her."

Mrs. Everest clasped her baby closer to her. "O, these poor people, aren't they extraordinary! Now, that woman's false pride won't allow me to help her, and yet she lets this poor child work—and her own, too, I daresay, for she would not require of one what she would not require of the others."

"I understood her to say that they all had work of some kind through the Christmas holidays. Can

you in any way get at the employers of this child labor?"

"I shall make it my business to do so," said Mrs. Everest, warmly. "I shall go to see Mrs. Tingsby to-day and question her."

"If you want money for prosecution, call on me," said the Judge.

"Thank you, I will. Well, what are you going to do about the little girl if you cannot find a home? Don't send her back to Mrs. Tingsby's. Give her to me, rather."

"This would be a charming place for her," said the Judge, looking about him. "I never thought of that. I don't know anyone I would rather give the child to than to you."

"I should be delighted to have her," said Mrs. Everest, heartily, "and would try to make her happy; but in taking her I would not have you suppose for one single instant that I think you are not a very suitable and proper person to have charge of her. Do you know, I have often wondered why you have not done more active charitable work. You are so eminently qualified for it, and you have always been so generous and so sympathetic in your donations, that we all know your heart is with us."

The Judge sighed. "I have had a very busy life, and then my troubles have made me egotistical. May I bring the little girl in for you to see her?"

"Certainly, or let me ring. Daisy will get her."

The happy-faced little maid, upon being instructed, quickly ran downstairs and returned with Bethany.

Mrs. Everest put down the baby and went to meet her. "How do you do, dear?" she said, kissing her. Then, drawing her to the fire, she took off her gloves and rubbed her fingers.

"Why, you are quite cold," she said; "quite cold, and you look forlorn."

She took off the fur cap, and for a few minutes silently stroked Bethany's pale, unhappy cheeks. Then she whispered, "What is the matter, darling?"

Not since her mother's death had a lady, a genuine lady, put her arm round the shrinking, sensitive child and whispered to her in tones sweet and clear. Something in Bethany's heart responded. She could not speak, but she silently returned the pressure of Mrs. Everest's hands and gazed into her eyes in dumb misery.

The Judge, in the meantime, got up, walked about the room in some embarrassment, and tried to avoid the overtures of the too-friendly baby, who was creeping briskly after him, gurgling in his throat, and begging for permission to play with his feet.

"What is the matter?" whispered Mrs. Everest, "is it that you don't want to leave the Judge and Titus?"

Bethany silently nodded her head.

"Would you like to come and live with me and be my little girl?" pursued Mrs. Everest.

She felt the little form shrink within her arms.

"You would rather stay with the Judge?"

Bethany nodded again.

Mrs. Everest looked over her shoulder. "What do you call him?"

"My little pet name for him is Daddy Grandpa," whispered the child, brokenly.

"Then leave me, run right up to him, throw your arms round his neck, and say, 'Please, dear Daddy Grandpa, don't send me away from you.'"

Somewhat to Mrs. Everest's surprise, for she did not know what a relief the suggestion was to the child's breaking heart, Bethany broke from her arms and rushed to the Judge, and, not being able to reach his neck, clasped his coat, or as much of it as she could grasp, and fairly shrieked in her nervousness, "Dear Daddy Grandpa, *please* don't send me away from you."

The Judge stopped short. His first thought was that the active baby had risen and was seizing him. Then he looked down into Bethany's agitated face and said, "What! What!"

"Dear Daddy Grandpa," she cried again; then her overwrought nerves gave way, and she burst into a frantic fit of sobbing.

"She doesn't want to live with me," said Mrs. Everest, shaking her black head, and as if remarking, "I am sorry, but it is no concern of mine," she sat down and took up her own baby.

Bethany was clasping the coat and crying as if her heart would break.

"Upon my word!" ejaculated the Judge. "Upon my word!"

This was his exclamation in moments of great perplexity. "Little girl!" he said. "Little girl!"

This torrent of tears distressed him and made him vaguely alarmed.

"Bethany, child," he said, in haste, "little girl, do you want to go home?"

Home! That was the magic word that the child wanted.

"O, yes, sir; yes, sir!" she gasped, and with a hurried farewell to Mrs. Everest the Judge picked up the sorrowful child in his arms and fairly ran downstairs with her.

CHAPTER IX

ANOTHER SURPRISE

THE Judge's ship had sailed into clear waters—his venture of the other day had, so far, proved eminently successful.

It was just one week after his call on Mrs. Everest. On his way home that day with the disturbed Bethany nestling close to him in the sleigh he had said to himself many times, "I don't know what Titus will say—I don't know what Titus will say."

Titus said very little. When his grandfather called him into his study and told him that Bethany seemed to be greatly upset at the thought of leaving them, Titus replied briefly, "T-t-then keep her, sir."

"But the brother for you—the boy I was going to adopt," said the Judge.

"I-I-I don't want a brother, sir," Titus returned; "never did want one—a-a-am glad to get rid of the thought of one."

"Then you like this little girl?" said the Judge, anxiously.

"D-d-don't like her and don't dislike her," Titus replied. "She isn't in my way—isn't bad as girls go."

The matter ended here as far as discussion went, and Bethany slipped into her place as a member of the household. She was a very good child, quiet and well behaved, and insensibly she was becoming

a great comfort and a great amusement to the Judge. He loved to see her down on the hearthrug playing with the pigeon and talking to her. For it was absolutely necessary for Bethany to have a listener. She dreamed such wonderful dreams and saw such astonishing visions that it took several hours a day of some one's time to listen to her.

Bethany felt that the pigeon was sympathetic. She always listened with her greenish-yellow eyes bent attentively on her, and at times she interposed a lively "Rookety cahoo!" So at least she was not asleep, as the Judge sometimes was, when Bethany was relating her marvels.

She had soon got the Judge to show her the pictures of Ellen and Susie, his two little girls that had died, and now nearly every night Bethany fancied that she saw them. She described them dressed in their old-fashioned little garments, their hair braided in little tails tied with ribbon, their talk quaint and demure and seasoned with Bethany's maxims.

The Judge, touched and amused, listened to as many of her conversations as he had time or inclination for, then he went to sleep, and Bethany turned to the pigeon.

On this particular day the Judge was reading his morning's mail.

Bethany had gone to school—the Judge had found a kindergarten round the corner on a quiet street—and Titus was taking a lesson from a gentleman who had effected a number of famous cures in cases of stuttering, and who came all the way from Boston to treat him.

So far he had done no good. Titus was a mild, persistent, and consistent stutterer. He never failed to hesitate at the beginning of a sentence unless he was deeply moved about something—he rarely stopped in the middle of one.

The Judge, fearing Higby's bad example, had spoken of sending him away, though it was with extreme reluctance that he even spoke of discharging so faithful a servant. Titus's teacher did not urge him to do so. He said that Higby was a stammerer, while Titus, as yet, only stuttered. The boy's habit could be broken if he gave himself earnestly to breaking it up. "Wait a little," he said to the Judge. "He does not take himself seriously yet. Wait till something rouses him and makes him coöperate with me."

"I should think that his comrades making fun of him would arouse him," said the Judge.

"It probably will, but later on," replied the teacher, so the Judge was obliged to possess his soul in patience.

On this morning Titus was to finish his lesson and then go to school. At present he was in a small sitting room, while the Judge was in his study just across the hall.

Presently the master of the house took up a note written in a dainty feminine hand.

It was from the lady who was teaching Bethany. The Judge read it, then he began to laugh. Mrs. Hume was speaking of Bethany's facility in making paper boxes; she was a marvelous, a wonderful child; she outdistanced all the others. She was a prodigy.

The Judge laughed more heartily than ever. He could fancy demure little Bethany's slender fingers manipulating the too familiar cardboard. The child had evidently not told her teacher where she had learned the art of making boxes. She was an honest child, but she was inclined to be shy with strangers. Just as well in this case for her to be so. Her associates were mostly Grand Avenue children. Young as they were, they might look strangely upon the little girl who had been obliged to earn her living.

It was very amusing, though, to the Judge to read this lady's gushing remarks on the subject of Bethany's dexterity. He laughed again, and this time with such heartiness that he had to put up a handkerchief to wipe the tears from his eyes. Then he somewhat ruefully surveyed the remaining heap of letters.

"Who laughs hard prepares to cry harder," he said, seriously. "There will be something there to make me sad."

There was. The next letter he took up caused his jaw to drop like that of an old man.

He was absolutely confounded. He sat stock still, gazing with unseeing eyes at the pigeon, who, sharp enough to perceive that there was something the matter with him, flew up on the table, paraded over his heap of letters and papers, and uttered an inquiring "Rookety cahoo?"

The Judge did not hear her, and yet he was listening intently. His own door was ajar, and when a few minutes later the sitting room door opened and Titus came out into the hall he called, weakly, "Grandson!"

Now he never said "Grandson!" unless something serious was the matter, so Titus hastened to him.

"What is it?" he asked, forgetting to stutter as he always did when greatly excited.

The Judge straightened himself. "I've had a blow. Read that—or listen. The writing is bad," and he threw himself back in his chair and, putting on his glasses, took up the letter.

"Who is it from?" inquired Titus.

"Do you remember hearing me speak of Folsom, an old university friend of mine?"

"The fellow that was so crazy about work among the poor?"

"The same. Poor Folsom, he was always an enthusiast, but I considered him reliable. He became a clergyman and went to New York in connection with the mission work of some church. Listen to what he writes:

"MY DEAR SANCROFT: What a whiff of good times I have had this morning! I left the slums for a call on our dear old Georgeson of the Era, into whose pockets my hand is permitted to go pretty freely. I found him seated in his magnificent office, a financial king on his throne. He showed me your letter to him about a boy to adopt. "Georgeson," said I, "I have just the thing." He advised me to correspond with you, but what need is there of correspondence when I have the very article you want. An English actor died in my rooms the other day, a man of the highest respectability. He left one lad—a jewel of a boy, fair-haired and sunny-

tempered. Just the companion you would wish for your own lad, who, if he resembles his grandfather, will be dark as to hair and eyes. This boy has absolutely not a relative in the world. He is a thorough gentleman; you will love him as a son. I have not time to hear from you. Will put him on one of the morning trains for Boston. You may expect him some time Thursday. Don't forget my work among the poor. God has blessed you freely; freely give.

“Your old friend,
“RALPH FOLSOM.”

“Rattlebrain! Gusher! Enthusiast!” exclaimed the Judge when he finished. His stupefaction was over. He began to be angry.

“Do you see he does not even ask to hear from me what I think of this,” he went on, shaking the letter at Titus, who sat open-mouthed. “He is so sure he is right. He always was—rushed headlong into every breach. I would not have had him mixed up in this matter for a very great deal. Georgeson is a foolish man not to keep his own council,” and in considerable excitement the Judge got up and paced the floor.

“If I knew when he was coming I would meet him at the station and send him right back to Folsom,” he said at last, stopping before Titus:

“Well, sir,” said the boy, “he's got to come on the 10:30 or the 3:15. If he comes on the 10:30 he's here now. I'll look out the hall window now,” and he stepped outside.

“Jiminy!” he exclaimed, rushing back, “here's

an open sleigh coming full tilt down the avenue with a boy in it."

The Judge wheeled round as if to go into the hall, then he stopped short. "I can't see him. After all, it isn't his fault, and he has been lately bereaved. Do you receive him, Titus?"

"I-I-I was going to school," said Titus, who, having recovered his equilibrium, began to stutter; "shall I take him with me?"

"Yes, no; I don't care," said the Judge. "Tell him how things are if you get a chance. I'll see him at lunch."

Titus darted out of the room, went running and limping down the stairs, and was beside Higby when he opened the door.

A tall, pale, handsome lad in a thin light overcoat stood on the threshold.

"Is this Judge Sancroft's house?" he asked, fixing his bright blue eyes on Higby and yet casting a glance beyond at Titus.

Higby nodded.

The boy turned, and the driver came running up the steps with a shabby leather bag.

The boy himself was carrying in his hand a small padlocked wooden box with a perforated cover. After paying the driver he followed Higby, who was taking his bag into the hall.

Titus, in his confusion, was saying nothing, and the boy, turning to him, remarked courteously, "I suppose you are Judge Sancroft's grandson?"

"Yes," replied Titus, simply, "I am." Then he continued staring at his guest, until a half smile on the stranger's face recalled him to himself.

"Take off your coat," he said, suddenly, "and come in to the fire. There isn't any in the parlor," and he thrust his head in the doorway, "but come in the dining room—there's sure to be a good one there."

The boy threw his thin coat over a hall chair, put his small wooden box under it and his hat on top, then followed Titus.

"Are you cold?" inquired Titus, motioning his guest to one of the big leather-covered chairs by the fireplace and taking the other himself.

"Not at all, thank you," said the boy, but the hands that he held out to the blaze were red and covered with chilblains, and Titus, remembering his thin gloves, felt sorry that he had asked the question.

"I dare say you're hungry," observed Titus, suddenly. "I always am when I've been in the train. What would you like? It's a good while before lunch."

"Ah, thank you," said the other, politely; "if I might have a little meat, just a little."

"Meat," repeated Titus, "certainly. Higby," and he turned toward the man, who, with a face brimful of curiosity, was coming in with some coal for the fire, "please have some meat brought up."

"And have it raw," said the stranger, with exquisite courtesy.

Titus threw a glance at the boy's pale cheeks. He looked sick. Probably he was taking a raw-meat cure.

"What kind of m-m-meat?" inquired Higby, goggling at the newcomer.

"Any kind," replied the boy, smoothly.

"What's your name?" blurted Titus, in an embarrassed manner when Higby had left the room.

"Dallas de Warren."

"Ah!" said Titus, and he drew a long breath. Then a succession of confused thoughts began to pass through his brain. He was not a brilliant boy, but he was not without shrewdness. He felt that the lad before him, though perfectly calm and apparently happy, had been led to expect a different welcome from this. The enthusiastic, elderly clergyman in New York had probably told the lad that the two Sancrofts would fall on his neck. What could Titus do to be more agreeable? He would better apologize for his grandfather. The lad had not mentioned him, but Titus felt sure that he was thinking of him.

"Dallas," he said, bluntly, "my grandfather won't be down till half-past one. He is busy in his study—gets a lot of letters in the morning."

"Indeed," replied the boy, with a movement of his head like that of an older person, "I can fancy that he is very much occupied. And then he would hardly get Mr. Folsom's letter saying I was coming until this morning."

"No, he didn't," said Titus, "he had just got it when you came."

"Then I would be a kind of surprise to him," said the boy, pleasantly, and his big blue eyes fixed themselves calmly on Titus's dark face.

The Sancroft boy was in torture. He felt himself growing crimson. His cheeks would tell the whole story.

They did. The English boy understood. He

was not wanted. However, his manner did not change.

He coolly uncrossed his feet, put the left one where the right one had been, so that it would get a little more heat from the fire, and meditatively gazed at the leaping flames.

Titus, with a dull pain at his heart, noted that the boy's shoes were more than half worn. One of them, indeed, had a hole in it. Why were things so unequal in this world? He never used to notice that there was a difference between other boys and himself. Now he was beginning to see that boys just as deserving as himself and Charlie Brown were shabbily and insufficiently dressed. Why, this boy, for instance, had not enough on to keep him warm. Why was it? Why had he no rich grandfather to clothe him?

"Here is the meat, sir," said Higby, trotting into the room with a plate in his hand; "minced beef, sir," and he respectfully put it on the table near the English boy."

A shade passed over the stranger's face. With all his self-possession he could not help showing that he was disappointed.

"What's wrong?" asked Titus, bluntly.

"O, nothing—nothing," replied Dallas, with a wave of his hand. "Only that I would have preferred it whole. I should have said so; it was stupid in me."

"Have you any more?" said Titus to Higby.

"Yes, sir; a whole joint."

"Then take that away and get an uncut piece."

The English boy's face lighted up strangely.

"And, Higby," said Titus, "bring crackers and something to drink. What will you have, Dallas?"

"O, anything," said the boy, politely; "any kind of wine—sherry, perhaps."

Titus drew his dark eyebrows together. "My grandfather is a strict temperance man; won't have wine in the house, even for pudding sauces."

"O, indeed," said the boy, lightly, and with veiled amusement; "well, it doesn't matter. Cold water will do, or a cup of tea."

"We have homemade w-w-wines, sir," said Higby, insinuatingly.

"Bring him some rhubarb," said Titus; "that is good."

Higby disappeared, and Titus sank back into his chair. There was a heavy dew of perspiration on his lip. He did not like this business of entertaining. What could he do to amuse his guest while Higby was absent? Perhaps the new boy liked pigeons.

"I say," he remarked, suddenly, "do you like any kind of pet birds?"

Dallas scrutinized Titus's face intently before he replied; then he said, "I'm awfully fond of them."

"What kind?" asked Titus.

"Well, I like canaries and robins—"

Titus's face was unresponsive, and the stranger went on, tentatively, "and doves, and linnets, and thrushes, and mocking-birds—"

He had not struck the right kind of bird yet, and he put up a hand and pushed back the light hair from his pale forehead.

"Cage birds, do you mean?" he said, courteously, "or yard birds?"

"I mean pigeons," replied his host, dryly.

"O, pigeons," said Dallas, with relief; "they're my favorite birds. I love them."

He spoke so warmly that Titus's heart was almost touched in one of his tenderest spots. Almost, but not quite. He had a vague distrust of this English boy, with his fine manners and his peculiar, lofty accent. However, Titus felt ashamed of himself for this distrust, and therefore said in a gruffly polite tone, "Want to see mine? I've got some beauties?"

The stranger's face clouded the very least little bit in the world.

"There are one or two things I should like to unpack first," he said, eyeing the tray that Higby was bringing in. "After that I should be delighted—"

"Very well," said Titus, "you eat your meat and I'll go see what room you're to have."

Catching sight of Mrs. Blodgett in the big upstairs pantry he rushed in.

"Blodgieblossom," he said, "there's a boy here—he's going to stay all night. Which room shall I take him to?"

"Bless me, Master Titus," said the woman, withdrawing her gaze from the china closet, "give me a little notice. The bed has to be aired and clean sheets put on, and dusting to be done."

"I tell you, he's got to go in it now," said Titus, imperiously. "I want him to hurry up and come with me to the pigeon loft."

Mrs. Blodgett smiled. She took to herself the

credit of the acquisition of so many handsome birds. Everything had to give way to the pigeons, and, feeling in one of the pockets of her big apron for her bunch of keys, she said, "You can follow me, dear lad, in five minutes to the wee clock room. I guess that will do, won't it?"

"Yes, if it's large enough," said Titus, doubtfully.

"It's big enough for a night or two," she said, easily, and she proceeded on her way upstairs.

Near the front hall door she met Higby.

"Say," he whispered, seizing her by the sleeve, "say, I believe the Judge has ad-d-dopted another boy."

Mrs. Blodgett could not speak. She stared at him silently for a few instants, then with a strange weakness at her knees began ascending the stairs.

Titus went back to the dining room. The new boy had eaten his crackers and drunk the wine, but he had the plate of meat in his hand.

"I think I will take this upstairs," he said, pleasantly.

"All right," said Titus, and he slowly led the way to the hall.

Everything was gone that belonged to the boy—leather bag, coat, and wooden box.

His face fell, and he looked almost angry.

"The servants have taken them up," said Titus, noticing his discomposure.

"O, very kind of them," said the boy, hurriedly. "I am so unused to be waited on," and he went upstairs so quickly that, although not knowing the way, he kept ahead of Titus.

Mrs. Blodgett and Higby were both fussing about the little room, where a Swiss cuckoo clock hung in the corner.

The English boy tried to subdue his impatience as he glanced at them, and as soon as they left the room he put his plate of meat down on the dressing table and looked at Titus.

"Wants to eat alone like a dog," thought the latter to himself, and saying, "I'll wait for you outside," he walked toward the door.

He threw a glance over his shoulder before he went out and saw the English lad go fussily toward the little padlocked wooden box that he had been carrying in his hand when he arrived and carefully lift it to the table beside the plate of meat.

"Must have some treasure in it," murmured Titus, and he went on his way to lounge about the halls, wipe the perspiration from his face, and wonder what his grandfather would say to the English boy.

CHAPTER X

THE ENGLISH BOY

BETHANY came home from school that day full of glee. She had gained a little prize for good work. "What kind of work?" inquired the Judge.

Bethany looked up at him and smiled—such a demure, knowing little smile. Then she pressed his hand to her lips. "Making boxes, Daddy Grandpa."

She was swinging on the Judge's hand, leading him down to the lunch table. Every day she ran up to his study at one o'clock when she came from school. That gave her time for a little chat with him and a play with Sukey before the bell rang for lunch.

She noticed that the Judge was graver than usual to-day, and she said suddenly, "Are you ill, Daddy Grandpa?"

"No, child," he said, slowly, but he immediately lapsed into gravity. He always felt deeply mortified and ashamed of himself after any indulgence in excitement or annoyance. He had been greatly disturbed this morning—foolishly so. There was no necessity for annoyance. All that he had to do was to take the affair calmly and to send the boy back.

So it was really with kindness and sympathy that he shook the hand of the orphan lad standing beside Titus in the dining room.

The English boy was somewhat puzzled. At first he had been sure that this old gentleman did not want him. Now he was not so sure about it, so fatherly was the Judge's manner.

Bethany was the life of the table. She was not a chatterbox, but she possessed a peculiar mind, and what she said often amused the Judge and always amused Titus.

The English boy was greatly taken with her. His glance rested often upon her pretty brown head, and he secretly and bitterly envied her. Here, he thought, in ignorance of her past life, is a child born to affluence and delightful surroundings. How little she knows of the cold world and the struggling for existence there.

Bethany was prattling about ghosts, one of her favorite subjects. Last night she had talked with Ellen and Susie, the Judge's two little daughters.

"W-w-what were they doing?" said Titus, seriously. He did not dare to jest upon such a subject, though sometimes his boyish soul was sorely tempted to do so.

"Ellen, she had a little basket in her hands, and she was going to pick blueberries," replied Bethany. "She said, 'Bethany, come with us.'"

"And did you go?" asked Titus.

"Course I did; I, and Ellen, and Susie set out. We hadn't gone far when we met a lion."

"A-a-a lion!" ejaculated Titus.

"Yes, a truly lion," said Bethany, smiling enough to show two rows of white little teeth; "a kind Mr. Lion. Said he, 'Little girls, come with me. I'll show you where the blueberries grow.' Ellen said,

'Mr. Lion, how do you know where the blueberries grow, because we haven't any lions in America.' Mr. Lion said he had run away from a circus because the men beat him and fired pistols at him, and he was living on blueberries, and they were very sweet."

"N-n-now, Bethany," interposed Titus, "a lion is a meat-eating animal; it couldn't live on berries."

"But, boy," she replied (she often called him boy), with an obstinate little shake of her head, "this was a ghost lion."

"A dream lion, you mean," said Titus.

She turned her clear eyes on the Judge. "You understand me, Daddy Grandpa?"

Her faith in him was so great that he would not have had the heart to shake it even if he had wished to do so. Therefore he nodded kindly, and Bethany proceeded:

"The dear ghost lion took us on his back—Ellen and Susie and me—and we hadn't gone far before we met a bear."

"A-a-a bear!" said Titus, in pretended surprise.

"Yes, a bad, bad bear. Said the bad, bad bear, 'I am looking for little girls.'

"Said the dear ghost lion, with a sweet roar, 'What kind of little girls?'

"Said the big black bear, 'Little girls who haven't any home. I eat them up, or I take them to my cubs in my den.'

"Said the good ghost lion, 'Why don't you eat little girls that have good homes?'

"'Cause,' he said, 'cause the fathers and mothers would be so, so angry. They would come and

hunt me and kill my dear baby cubs. I'm only looking for little orphan girls. Answer my question quick: Have those little girls on your back got any parents?'

"'No,' said the dear lion, 'but they have the next best thing—they have a Daddy Grandpa. He'll kill you and eat your cubs if you dare to touch them. Stand aside, wretch!'"

Titus, at this quietly dramatic command of the lion, became so convulsed with amusement that Bethany, in confusion, stopped, and would not go on.

Titus, recovering himself, begged her pardon, but she was inexorable.

"'Ceptin' Daddy Grandpa, no boy shall ever know what became of the good lion and the bad bear," she said, firmly, but without the slightest resentment, for she immediately went on talking to Titus on other subjects.

She did not seem to show much curiosity with regard to the English boy, though he was gazing at her with the greatest amusement and interest.

Her prattle soothed the Judge; she was beginning to be a great comfort to him. A little girl about the house was more company than a boy, and she was quieter. He liked boys, and yet there were times when he would just as soon have a whirlwind in his study as his dear grandson Titus. Bethany was never noisy, never violent. She crept about the house after him like a little mouse.

"Yes, dear," he said; "what is it?" for she was patiently waiting for him to answer some question. "May you go to drive with me this afternoon? Cer-

tainly; it is much pleasanter to have a little girl than to go alone."

Then, for they had all finished eating, he got up from the table.

"I want to speak to you, my lad," he said, laying a hand on the shoulder of the English boy.

Titus looked pityingly after Dallas as the Judge led the way to the large, handsome parlor—the one room that they all disliked, since there was no woman in the house to give it a homelike air.

The Judge closed the door after him, then he turned to Dallas.

"My boy," he said, kindly, "I am very sorry to inform you that you have come here through a mistake. Mr. Folsom was not authorized to send you. I do not see anything for you to do but to go back."

Whatever the English boy's feelings were, he bravely surmounted them and, quietly bowing his head, he said, respectfully, "very well; I will do as you wish."

"You look pale," said the Judge, kindly. "I do not think the air of New York is good for growing lads, so if you wish I will allow you to stay here a few days before going back to Mr. Folsom."

The boy's face flushed gratefully. "I am greatly pleased to accept your offer, sir; I will stay gladly."

"I will advise Mr. Folsom of my decision," said the Judge, "so that he can be making other arrangements for you. In the meantime, amuse yourself as best you can. My grandson will, I know, do all he can to entertain you," and the Judge paused and glanced delicately at the lad's thin suit of clothes.

"I will take you to my tailor's this afternoon."

Dallas's face became as red as fire. "I would rather not, sir; if I am not to stay here I can accept no favors."

"Nonsense, my boy," replied the Judge. "By staying a few days you are accepting a favor, and you are not suitably dressed for this cold weather. If I were a poor boy, and you a well-to-do man, would you not give me a suit of clothes?"

"Yes, indeed," he said, earnestly.

"Then think no more about it. It is no disgrace to be poor. It is a disgrace to suffer when friends are willing to relieve you."

The Judge paused, and the interview was closed.

Dallas went away, and Titus was informed by his grandfather of what had occurred.

"I want you to entertain him for a few days," the Judge said.

"Very well, sir," replied the boy, submissively, but there was no pleasure on his face, nor graciousness in his manner.

"Don't you like this boy?" asked the Judge.

"I don't know him," said Titus, gruffly.

The Judge pondered. Titus was not stuttering; he was disturbed in some way.

"He speaks peculiarly," remarked the Judge, "at least to our ears. We do not hear very much that broad sound of the 'a' here."

Titus maintained a grim silence.

"Suppose you were alone in the world?" suggested the Judge, softly.

"I'll take care of him, sir," said Titus, almost roughly, and he hurried away.

He kept his word. For five days he was just as attentive to the stranger as one lad could be to another. They were scarcely separated one hour, and there was not a hint of discord between them. The Judge saw very little of them except at meal times. He was struck by the exquisite and unfailing courtesy of the newcomer. Nothing ruffled him, nothing caused him to forget his good manners. They really seemed to be a part of him. Sometimes the Judge felt a vague uneasiness that all this politeness hid something that ought to have been revealed—that the boy was too agreeable to be genuine. He was pretty sure that Titus agreed with him in this, although he had never heard him discuss his new friend with anyone.

"Titus," he said one day when Dallas happened to be away with Charlie Brown, "Dallas's visit is drawing to a close. I hope that he considers it a successful one."

Titus gave him a peculiar look. "I think he does, sir."

"The servants have been respectful to him, I hope."

"They've got to be," said Titus, grimly; "he has a way with him—"

"What kind of a way?" inquired the Judge.

"Hard inside and soft out," replied the boy, "and his blood is blue. Theirs is only red."

"Is he proud of his culture?"

"He's got a pedigree," said Titus, gloomily, "a pedigree as long as your arm, and he carries it in that old leather bag. It takes the de Warrens away back to William the Conqueror."

"Why, so have you a pedigree for that matter," and the Judge smiled.

Titus looked up quickly, and the Judge opened one of his table drawers. "When I was in England last I went to a heraldic office. I knew that Sancroft was an old English name, and I wished authentic information respecting our descent. There I saw our armorial bearings and got the pedigree. Here it is."

The boy eagerly took the long slip of paper.

"Do you see," said the Judge, "you can trace your ancestry back to a viking of Norway."

"Hooray!" said Titus, suddenly brandishing the paper as if it were a weapon, "farther back than his. May I show this to Dallas?"

"Certainly."

The boy stopped on his way out of the room and said in an injured voice, "Why didn't you show me this before, sir?"

"I didn't know that you would be interested," said the Judge, in much amusement. "We pay, or have paid, so little attention to such matters in America. However, you are typical. The younger generation is thinking more about ancestral descent than ever the older ones have thought."

Titus ran away, and the Judge gazed thoughtfully out of the window. Sukey was on the balcony nodding and bowing very energetically at a number of common street pigeons who were very anxious to perch beside her.

Higby had put her bath out in the sun, and it looked very attractive to them, but she was determined that they should not bathe in her china bowl.

One male pigeon lighted on the railing, and, strutting and talking to the princess, at last persuaded himself that she was favorably inclined toward him. He flew boldly on the edge of the dish. Whereupon Sukey ran forward, seized him by the short, soft feathers of the neck, and in a most unprincesslike rage shook him and dragged him about, until at last he was glad to get away from her.

The Judge smiled and stepped out on the balcony.

He looked down on a calm, homelike scene. All about him were handsome houses standing in their own grounds. The snow lay thickly over everything now, even the trees were laden with it, but the winter scene had a beauty of its own. The day was not cold; it was barely freezing. Roblee was sweeping the concrete in front of the stable in his shirt sleeves. Two of the maids were brushing a rug at the back door, and Mrs. Blodgett was standing in the sunshine watching them, with nothing but an apron thrown over her head.

Presently Dallas came through the stable and down the walk to the house. The Judge noticed what a kind smile he threw each of the servants as he passed them and how respectfully they eyed him.

He waited till he heard the lad coming up the stairs and through the hall outside his study, then he stepped out to meet him.

"How well the boy looked! His new clothes had come the day before. In deference to his wishes, the Judge had ordered black for him. Dallas had been very much touched—indeed, he had almost broken down—and he had confided the information to the Judge that his inability to put on mourning

for his beloved father had been a great grief to him.

"Dallas," said the Judge, kindly, "Mr. Folsom expects you to-morrow evening. You must take the early morning train from here."

A quick, heavy shadow passed over the boy's face, but he said, composedly, "Very well, sir. I shall be ready." Then he passed on to his room upstairs.

With a strange sinking of the heart the Judge paced slowly up and down the hall. He was sorry to send the lad away, very sorry indeed, for he feared that he did not want to go.

Presently he paused in his walk and went to the big hall window overlooking the street. Where was Bethany? The mild afternoon was drawing to a close. It would soon be dark; she ought to be in. Just after dinner she had gone for a drive with him, then had asked permission to take some flowers to a sick child a few doors away, but she should have returned by this time. Ah! there she was, crossing the street. But what was the child doing?

The Judge's eyes were affectionately fastened on the little white-fur figure coming toward the house. In the middle of the snowy avenue she had paused. A coal cart, lately passing, had shaken off some black lumps on the street. Bethany was surveying these lumps with interest. "Now, what has she got in her little head?" thought the Judge with amusement.

Suddenly the child bent over. She carefully set down the little pink beribboned basket in which she had carried the flowers to the sick playmate, drew a tiny handkerchief from her pocket, and spreading

it in the basket she took off her gloves and was carefully lifting the lumps of coal one by one, when she had two interruptions. The first came from two ladies, neighbors, who were going to their homes near by. The Judge saw them stop and speak to Bethany, then he opened the window.

In unconcealed amusement they were asking her what she was going to do with the coal.

She seemed to be shyly evading their questions, and as they passed on the Judge heard one of them say, in a clear voice, "How curious it is that a black, dirty thing like coal should have such a fascination for the average child!"

Bethany's second interruption was not so easily put off. Mrs. Blodgett, whose keen eyes surveyed not only the interior of the Judge's mansion but also its exterior and the avenue on which it was situated, had espied the stray lamb, and the Judge saw her fat figure descending the steps with considerable agility and pouncing upon Bethany.

"Here, dear child," she said, "come into the house this minute."

Bethany protested slightly, but Mrs. Blodgett calmly seized the basket, turned it upside down, took her by the hand, and led her into the house.

Just before they arrived outside his study the Judge closed the window and went inside beside his fire.

"Sir," said Mrs. Blodgett, knocking on the half-open door, "can you speak to this little girl?"

"Come in," he said, and Mrs. Blodgett walked in, still holding Bethany, who looked disturbed and a little rebellious.

"Now, sir," said Mrs. Blodgett, decidedly, "I wish you would speak to this little girl, for she don't mind me. I'm tellin' her all the time that, though you don't like wastefulness, yet meanness is hateful to you, and she do do the strangest things. She picks up coal and little bits of sticks for the fire, an' she goes round an' smells the soap—"

"Smells the soap?" repeated the Judge, in bewilderment.

"Yes, sir; I caught her the other day. She were in your room. You know, sir, you has in your bathroom sandalwood soap. Master Titus, he have pure Castile; the strange boy he have common toilet; in the kitchen we have Hittaker's."

"Ah! Hittaker's," interposed the Judge, "is that a good soap?"

"Fine, sir, for a cheap soap. But what I was goin' to say is this: This here little girl loves good soap, and, young as she be, she knows the difference. She rolled your cake in these weeny hands, she put it to that little nose, she wanted it herself, but what do she do? She slips into your dish the little bit of sandalwood that I'd given her, she goes to the upper hall closet an' takes a cake of Hittaker to her own room."

"Well!" observed the Judge, patiently. He did not understand what all this talk about coal, and sticks, and soap meant, and he did not like to see the sensitive child stand there looking like a culprit.

"Sir," said Mrs. Blodgett, solemnly, "she be a-tryin' to save."

The Judge started. This threw a new light on the subject.

"Yes," Mrs. Blodgett continued, "I know that this little girl has been a poor little girl, but her mother were a lady. I can tell by her ways, an' I'm tired of tellin' her that you don't want her to be a poor little girl no longer, a pickin', tradin', savin' little girl. You does the business. She has only to be good an' not wasteful, but also not beggarlike. What's what in one place isn't what's what in another. She have mentioned River Street. Now, River Street aint Grand Avenue."

"Very well, Mrs. Blodgett," said the Judge, with a reassuring nod, "I will talk to her," and in great relief the fat woman surrendered the culprit to him and went away.

After the housekeeper's departure Bethany advanced somewhat timidly to the fire, and, taking off her cap, coat, and gloves, placed them in a neat little heap on a chair. Then she looked up apprehensively at the Judge.

"You're not angry with Bethany, are you, Daddy Grandpa?"

"No," he said, "I'm not angry."

"We used to do it at Mrs. Tingsby's," she said, spreading her little hands to the blaze. "Annie, and Rodd, and Goldie, and I used to take little pails and go round the streets; on barge days we got lots."

"What do you mean by barge days," asked the Judge.

"Days when the barges came up the river with coal. Then the trucks took it round the city. We followed the trucks. We could keep the kitchen fire going for days. Lots of children did it, Daddy Grandpa."

The Judge was ominously silent, and Bethany went on in a depreciatory way. "Mrs. Tingsby was very good to me. When my mamma died she said, 'You must do all you can to help her, but do not go round to the hotels with her.'"

"To the hotels?" repeated the Judge.

"Yes, sir; to the back doors. They give poor people leavings from plates. Mrs. Tingsby used to get quite nice things sometimes, such as turkey slices, broken cake, perhaps even whole mutton chops, fish heads and tails, cut apples, decayed bananas, melted ice cream, lumps of pudding—"

"Stop!" implored the Judge.

Bethany looked up at him quietly, for she had been gazing at the fire and speaking in a dreamy fashion.

"They were very good, sir. Once I found a little turnover in a pail Mrs. Tingsby brought home—the sweetest little turnover I ever ate. There were lots of surprises. You know Jimmy Fox, the dog man, don't you?"

"No, I don't know him."

"Well, he has lots of dogs, and he lives out the back road near the iron works. Jimmy always carried a bag; Mrs. Tingsby, she took a pail. One night Jimmy got a whole rabbit. He was so pleased; but Mrs. Tingsby said there must have been something the matter with that rabbit, or they wouldn't have given him a whole one. However, Jimmy didn't die, and he ate it. She saw him."

The Judge tried to smile, but he could not. He did not find Bethany's reminiscences at all amusing.

"Child," he said, suddenly, "promise me that you won't pick up any more coal."

Bethany looked at him in surprise. "Why, course not, Daddy Grandpa, if you don't want me to."

"And take the soap Mrs. Blodgett gives you; don't use Hittaker's."

"Very well, Daddy Grandpa," she replied, quietly. "Has Bethany been a bad girl?"

"No, child, no; but it is not necessary for you to be so economical."

"I don't know what that means."

"It means saving. Do you think that Titus ought to go and pick up sticks for the fire?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"Because he isn't a little poor boy. He is your very own child."

"Yes, he is my very own grandson, and you are my very own granddaughter."

She took a quick step toward him, and in her excitement made one of her rare slips in speaking. "But he was borned that way."

"And you are made that way," said the Judge, firmly. "I make you my little granddaughter. Unless the Lord takes my money away from me, you will never have to pick up coal again."

"I didn't think you would send me back to River Street, Daddy Grandpa," she said, earnestly.

The Judge was silent, not knowing what turn her thoughts would take.

"I thought I was your little girl," she went on, earnestly, "your little poor girl. I picked up sticks and coal to help you. It is a good deal for you to

take a little poor girl when you have a rich boy to keep up."

"Child," said the Judge, firmly, "I don't wish any distinction to be made. You and Titus are on the same footing."

Bethany made a little obstinate movement of her neck. "My mamma told me all about it, sir. She said, 'Bethany, when I am dead, remember a 'dopted child isn't like a real child. She must be sweet, and good, because people are watching her. She must save everything, even a pin. She must say every day, 'Lord, keep me gentle like a lamb.'"

The Judge, somewhat disconcerted, said hastily, "I wish your mother had not told you that."

Bethany shook her head patiently. "You are very kind, sir, but you can't change me—I'm only 'dopted. I'm not borned your really grandchild."

Her companion was silent for a few minutes, musing on the enormous power of early impressions and maternal influence. At last he said, somewhat impatiently, "Then I suppose that as I am not your real grandfather you do not care much for me."

Bethany had begun to carefully stack her little arms with her wraps to take upstairs, but she suddenly laid them down again.

"Sir," she said, facing him once more, "last night I said to Ellen and Susie, said I, 'Girls, you must have been dreadful fond of your dear grandpa, who was your real grandpa, when I am only his play grandchild, and I just love him—just love him,'" she repeated, earnestly.

The Judge looked down at the little face glowing in the firelight.

"You are a good child," he said, softly, and he bent over and kissed her forehead; "whatever you say, you are my own dear granddaughter after this."

She smiled happily, then bent in a reproving way over the pigeon, who had come in and was pecking at one of her gloves that had fallen on the hearth-rug.

"Little saint, you must not soil Bethany's glove. You are a rich bird, and do not understand that poor little girls have to be careful of their clothes."

Sukey seized the glove and did her best to toss it into the ashes.

Bethany patiently took it from her, then she looked round. "Daddy Grandpa, where is Sukey's pincushion? She wants something to play with."

The Judge took the cushion from a drawer and put it on the hearthrug, and the pigeon, trotting over to it, began to pull out the large-headed pins and throw them about the carpet.

"I'll pick them up," said Bethany, "just as soon as I put my things away," and she again filled her arms with her wraps, the Judge agreeably placing the cap on the top of the pile.

"Good-bye," she said, sweetly, "I'll soon be back." Then she bent forward and looked mysteriously out into the hall, which Higby, strange to say, had not yet lighted.

"What do you see?" asked the Judge.

"The yellow, spotted dog," she replied, in a whisper. "I just caught one little glimpse of his tail. He's running upstairs. Maybe I'll find him under my bed."

The Judge watched her toiling up the staircase.

What a strange child! He had never heard her express any fear of the darkness. Indeed, it was so peopled with ghosts and fancies that he doubted if it had any terrors for her. It was rather filled with companionship. He often heard her talking to Ellen and Susie, to her mother and the yellow, spotted dog. Then he must also take into consideration that she was the child of poverty. Children nursed in the lap of luxury can afford to have nerves. The children of the poor must steel themselves to privations. Bethany had never been accustomed to lighted halls till she came here.

Dear little child! What kind of a woman would she make; and as the Judge went back into his study he put up a fervent prayer, "O! Lord, let me live till I see what is to become of my own child and the child of my adoption."

CHAPTER XI

DECEIT AND FORGIVENESS

EVERY morning before breakfast Titus went out to see his pigeons. He really had not time to do much more than look at them, for he was not an early riser. His real work in taking care of them was accomplished in the afternoon, at the close of school.

Bethany had found out about this habit of his of visiting the pigeon loft, and when he left his room in the morning he always found her loitering outside, waiting for an invitation to visit the "dear birds."

"Come on," Titus always said, and taking her hand he would run out to the stable.

The pigeons knew her as well as they knew him, and he often allowed her to give them a few handfuls of hemp seed. This seed, being of an oily nature, was not fed continuously to them, but they dearly loved it, and when Bethany stretched out her palms the pigeons flocked round her.

She shivered with delight when she felt their soft necks against her fingers, and she never laughed lest she should frighten them, although Titus, standing in the background, was often convulsed with amusement.

The pigeons, in their anxiety to get the seed, would crowd each other. Then there would be

fighters. The combatants, withdrawing from the others, would seize each other by the heads and drag each other about, finally coming back to find all the seeds gone. Their rueful faces when they contemplated Bethany's empty palms were very amusing, and with a foolish air they always listened to the little girl's gentle reproaches on the subject of quarreling.

Sometimes they had dances. That was their nearest approach to play. If they were particularly hungry when they saw Bethany coming with the hemp seed, they would all flap their wings and dance about her, often lifting themselves off their feet and turning round and round.

Since Dallas had come to Riverport he, too, had formed the habit of going out to see the pigeons, but on the morning of the day on which he was to leave, Titus and Bethany did not find him waiting for them.

"I-I-I don't expect him," said Titus. "I hope—I mean, I think—he's packing. His train leaves in an hour and a half. Come on in, Bethany. I'll run up and see if I can't help him."

Bethany trotted into the house and went into the dining room. The Judge was just entering it, and presently the servants filed in for prayers.

After prayers came breakfast, and then as the Judge and Bethany sat at the table Titus entered with a slow step and a rueful face.

"Dallas is ill, grandfather," he said, slowly.

The Judge looked up. "What is the matter with him?"

"I don't know, sir," said Titus, in a peculiar man-

ner. "His face is red, and he keeps his head under the bedclothes."

"He was quite well last evening," said the Judge, and his mind ran back to the night before, when, to his great relief, the English boy had been cheerful and entertaining, instead of moping, as he had feared he would do when he was informed that he must go back to New York.

"Yes, sir," said Titus, "he played those games fast enough."

"Perhaps he has taken cold," said the Judge; "I will go up and see," and, throwing his napkin on the table, he went slowly upstairs.

Dallas was red and feverish, and his eyes were bright.

"Have you a headache?" asked the Judge.

"A splitting one," replied the boy.

"And a pain in your back?"

"Fearful pain," and the boy groaned.

"I will send for a doctor," said the Judge. "Will you eat anything?"

"O, no, no; thank you," and he shook his head.

The Judge went downstairs and telephoned to his physician. Then he went back to the dining room and finished his breakfast.

As he left the dining room the doctor arrived. Not his own family physician, to the Judge's disappointment, but his assistant.

"I wished to see Dr. Moberly," he said to the young man, who pleasantly informed him that Dr. Moberly was in New York.

The Judge said nothing, but on accompanying

him to the English boy's room he saw that the young man was considerably puzzled by the case.

One minute he said he thought the lad was sickening for measles, then he inclined to scarlet fever, then to a feverish cold.

The Judge kindly but firmly told him that he would not require him to prescribe for the case, and, bowing him out, he again went to his telephone.

He would request the superintendent of the City Hospital to call. He had been greatly impressed by his knowledge of boys.

An hour later Dr. Reynald drove up.

"Against my rules, you know," he said, shaking his head at the Judge; "no private practice, but I couldn't refuse you. What do you want?"

The Judge told him. "I have an English boy staying with me. He was to have gone to New York this morning. He is ill and can't go; won't eat, and I am anxious about him."

"Take me to him," said Dr. Reynald.

They went upstairs together, and Dr. Reynald, after giving a sharp glance round his patient's room, went to the windows and pulled back the curtains. Then he sat down by the bed and fixed his bright, gray eyes on the boy.

Dallas became a more furious red than ever under his glance, and when the doctor said, "Let me feel your pulse," he half hesitated.

Dr. Reynald, however, gave a peremptory tap on the bedclothes, and the boy put out his hand.

It was only detained a short time. The doctor bent over him, passed a hand over his forehead, whispered a question, to which the boy gave a re-

luctant reply, then, getting up, he nodded to the Judge and went out of the room, followed by an ashamed, despairing glance from his patient.

The Judge took him in his study and shut the door. "Nothing dangerous, I hope; not smallpox, for example."

"Worse than that," replied Dr. Reynald, shortly.

"Worse? What can it be?"

"A touch of moral leprosy—the boy is shamming."

"Shamming!" exclaimed the Judge.

"Yes. I don't know the reason; perhaps you can tell me."

"He looks sick," said the Judge, uneasily. "I don't want to distrust your word, but is it possible that you are mistaken?"

"Not possible. We sometimes have such cases at the hospital. Then I made him confess himself that he was. Tell me something about this boy."

The Judge immediately told him all that he knew, and he had only uttered a few sentences when he became convinced that Dr. Reynald was right.

"It's the old, old story," he said, when he had finished what he knew of Dallas's antecedents. "I ought to know it better than most people. It is easier to do wrong than to do right."

Dr. Reynald smiled. "Yes, you ought to know; and yet I envy you your beautiful faith in human nature which you have kept, in spite of your profession."

"God knows I have tried to hold on to it," said the Judge, earnestly. "I would be willing to lie

down and die if for a moment I gave up my belief that there is good in every human heart."

"This is not a heinous case," said Dr. Reynald. "In fact, it is rather flattering. That storm-tossed lad finds this a quiet haven. He dreads to leave it."

"But his duplicity," said the Judge. "I must be severe with him for that. Now, evidently last evening when I told him he must leave he was much shocked. Yet he hid his real feelings."

"He was thinking out a plan," said Dr. Reynald. "He is a skillful diplomat. What are you going to do with him?"

"Tell him to get up and take the train for New York," said the Judge, firmly.

"And let him come back again next week."

The Judge smiled.

"Come, now," said Dr. Reynald, "confess that you are slightly pleased—an old fellow like you finding a slip of young life clinging to you."

The Judge laughed outright. "Ah! doctor, it is my environment that the boy likes. His poor young soul craves comfort."

"Not altogether," and Dr. Reynald shook his head obstinately. "I've seen luxurious interiors where a boy slip would not want to take root. There's something about you, Judge, attractive to young life. You ought to have a dozen youngsters."

His friend stretched out his hands. "Heaven forbid! but I will confess it caused me a pang to send this boy back to the New York whirlpool. Perhaps I am not sorry to shelter him for a time. Something else may turn up for him. Would you like him?"

"No, thank you," said Dr. Reynald, politely. "A hospital home and an old bachelor father would be cold comforts for your boy. No, keep him, but try to break him of that iniquitous habit of shamming."

"Do you suppose he has been deceiving in other things?" asked the Judge, anxiously.

"You said he had eaten no breakfast?"

"Yes, I did. He has eaten nothing this morning."

"He has been cramming himself with soda crackers. I smelt them on his breath."

"But I cannot bring up such a boy as this with Titus," remarked the Judge, indignantly.

"Do you think he can deceive your grandson as easily as he deceives you?" asked the doctor, sharply. "Ah! the *finesse* of youth—nothing equals it but the equal understanding of youth."

The Judge reflected for a minute. Titus's manner had been very peculiar when he announced Dallas's illness. He had also gone off to school without showing any particular concern about the English boy.

"I believe Titus knew," exclaimed the Judge.

"I believe he did," said Dr. Reynald, coolly, "from what I know of Titus. Don't distress yourself about a little lying. Children all take to it as ducks to water. The main thing is to get them out of it, before they get their feathers wet—and it takes a lot of soaking to wet them."

"Titus is no story-teller," said the Judge, thoughtfully, "though he does other provoking things."

"How old is he?"

"Fourteen."

"Then if he has not acquired the habit of lying

he won't get it now. Don't be afraid of the English boy, Judge. Give him a chance. It's an awful world for motherless and fatherless lads. I see them on the rocks every day."

"But I ought to send him back to New York," said the Judge, weakly.

"No such thing. Go upstairs, give him a tremendous scolding, then forgive him. You're not bound to keep him if he proves outrageous. But he won't. He's a delicate slip; he's looking for some soft corner to creep into like a sick cat or dog. Put yourself in his place, Judge; put yourself in his place."

The Judge did, and he shivered. "I will let him stay," he said, suddenly, "on your recommendation, but he must be talked to."

"Good-bye," said Dr. Reynald, with a mischievous face, "good-bye. Let me know when you have a serious case again," and he hurried out into the hall and downstairs.

The Judge went thoughtfully up to Dallas's bedroom.

The boy was half dressed, and when his friend and protector came into the room he sank on the bed in an attitude of the deepest dejection.

From the depths of his good, kind heart the man was glad to see that the boy was desperately ashamed of himself.

"Dallas," he said, kindly, "what have you to say for yourself?"

"Nothing, sir, nothing," said the lad, turning his face away.

"You have deceived me," said the Judge, softly.

"Yes, I have deceived you," said the boy, in a dull voice.

"You feel badly about it?"

"I don't know," said Dallas, wearily. "I suppose I do. I am so tired, sir. I have heard my father speak of hunting in England. The fox turns and twists; he does not know where to go."

The boy's attitude was so listless, his manner so utterly dejected, that the Judge's heart was touched with pity. No frantic protestations of regret, no tears would have appealed to him as did this simple hopelessness. The boy was done with stratagems.

"Dallas," he said, gently, "do you like my grandson?"

"Pretty well, sir."

"You have pretended to like him better than you do?"

"Yes, I have."

"You have been making yourself agreeable, hoping that I would change my mind about adopting you?"

"Yes, I have," he replied, bitterly.

"And when you found you had to go back to New York, what did you plan to do?"

"I didn't plan to do anything," said the boy, in a low, fierce tone. "What could I do? Your friend, the clergyman, is as poor as a church mouse; he couldn't keep me. I'd have to work in some low, dirty place. O, Lord! I wish I had strength enough of mind to poison myself."

"Dallas," said the Judge, "are you a lazy boy?"

"Is it laziness to hate smelling, poverty-stricken people and their queer ways, to dread to rub elbows

all the time with men and boys that talk horrid, vulgar talk, and that don't understand you?" asked the boy, almost rudely.

"I asked you whether you disliked work," said the Judge, firmly.

The boy stared at him. "I like to study, to handle nice, clean books and hear nice, clean language; but what does it matter what I like? You have washed your hands of me," and, dropping his head, he miserably toyed with an open penknife that he held in his hand.

The knife was red and stained, and the Judge eyed it suspiciously. "Dallas," he went on, decidedly, "deceit is easier to some natures than to others. I want you to tell me in just how many ways you have tried to make things appear other than they are since you have been here."

The boy got up in a tired way, sauntered to a closet, and opened the door. "There!" he said, bringing out a small box and setting it down on the floor. "I've deceived you all about these ever since I came," and taking a little key from his pocket he opened the padlock on the box and threw back the perforated lid.

The Judge started. There on a perch in the box sat two tiny owls—the softest, grayest little owls he had ever seen. They sat close to each other, seemingly not at all afraid, but fixing their large, beautiful round eyes on Dallas they uttered a simultaneous and soft "Too whoo, whoo, whoo whoo!"

"Well!" exclaimed the Judge, "well!"

"They are California screech owls," said the boy,

in a dull voice; "my father's pets. He loved birds, and bought these once in San Francisco when he was touring. When he died he asked me to take care of them, and I have done so for his sake, though I hate them."

"You hate them!" said the Judge. Was it possible that he had at last found a young person that did not like birds?

"Yes, I hate them," said the boy, energetically. "I hate all birds. I've been pretending to like pigeons to curry favor with your grandson. It doesn't matter about speaking the truth now that I am going away."

The Judge looked from the bits of raw meat in the box to Dallas's red penknife.

"Where do you get food for them?"

"I buy meat or beg it; and, in fact, all the family but Titus think that I'm taking a raw-meat cure. Titus caught on to me, though I don't know whether he understands what kind of creatures I'm feeding."

"I hope you don't keep them in that little box at night?"

"O, no; I let them fly about my room at night. They sleep all day."

The Judge put on his eyeglasses and stared at the little feathered creatures, who were sleepily blinking their eyes.

"Would they fly away if you let them out?"

"I don't think so, sir. My father used to let them out at night, and they would catch sparrows and bring them to our room and eat them."

"How curious!" remarked the Judge. Then he

went on, "We have no cats about the house. Let them have their liberty, but give them plenty of meat. We have not too many sparrows here."

Dallas looked sharply at him, but the Judge, taking no notice of his glance, calmly put his glasses in their case and returned them to his pocket. Then he said, irrelevantly, "Dallas, are you wholly English?"

"No, sir; only on my father's side. My mother was a Western girl."

"Has she any relatives living?"

"Only distant ones, and all poor as poverty."

"How long has your father been dead?"

"Three months."

"You missed him when he died?"

The boy gave him a look, such a look of utter, hopeless grief, of unavailing, stifled grief, that the Judge's kind heart ached with a sudden ache of pity and comprehension.

"Boy," he said, "you want a new father."

"Ah! that is something I shall never have," exclaimed Dallas, his whole soul rising in a protest of misery and revolt.

"Here is an unworthy substitute," said the Judge, quietly tapping his breast. "Stay with me, Dallas; be my boy."

The lad once more looked at him. He was more demonstrative than Titus. If conditions had been a little different he would have thrown himself on the neck of the kind man before him, he would have sobbed out some of his unhappiness to sympathetic ears. But the Judge was a comparative stranger to him, and he was so miserable, and so ashamed of

himself, that it seemed as if he could not be happy for a time at least.

“Get back into bed,” said the Judge, softly. “You are tired and worn out from mental stress and worry. Your meals will be served here to-day. To-morrow, if you feel like it, come downstairs and take your place among us. Only one thing I ask of you—be honest with me, Dallas. Will you, my boy?”

The lad turned and threw himself full length on the bed. His whole frame was shaking, and he could not utter a word.

The Judge did not insist, for he was a wise man. Softly closing the door, and gently shaking his head, he went slowly downstairs.

CHAPTER XII

THE YELLOW SPOTTED DOG

"I WONDER what Titus will say?" muttered the Judge to himself. "I wonder what Titus will say? Perhaps I should have waited to ask him."

"Titus," he said, when his grandson returned home from school, "what do you think of the English boy?"

Titus grinned, then he said, "How is he?"

"Did you think he was very ill?" inquired the Judge.

"You're going to keep him," said Titus, bluntly. "I knew you would. I knew he would get round you."

"Do you like him?" asked the Judge, anxiously.

"Not I," said Titus, contemptuously. "I think he's a great, big fraud."

The Judge sighed. Titus's manner was cool, but he must be greatly stirred about the matter, for he was not stuttering at all, and at each reply he made to his grandfather he stepped slightly forward.

Finding himself crowded against the parlor door, the Judge opened it and went in.

"Grandson," he said to Titus, who was still advancing, "I want you to do more good in the world than I have done."

"I'll be satisfied to do half as much," replied Titus, dryly.

"You liked the boy when he came," said the Judge, uneasily.

"I've never liked him for one single minute," said Titus, striking an inlaid table with his fist. "I've pretended to like him."

"So you pretend, too?" said the Judge.

"If I didn't pretend a bit," said Titus, energetically, "I'd be fighting from morning till night, with no stops for meals. Suppose I told half the fellows in school what I think of them?"

"Suppose I told half the men downtown what I think of them?" reflected the Judge, with inward shrinking.

"But there's different kinds of pretense," said Titus, still with animation and still pursuing his grandfather, who, occasionally looking over his shoulder, was stepping cautiously round the room. "I saw the fellow was going to stay here. I wasn't going to block him. I can keep out of his way."

"Then you are not prepared to receive him as a brother?"

"Brother—nonsense," said Titus, disrespectfully. "I tell you, grandfather, it's easier to father a boy than to brother him."

"He is going to be honest now," said the Judge.

"Moonshine!" exclaimed Titus, angrily stamping his foot. "He's a born actor, like his father."

"Titus," said the Judge, mildly, from a corner where he had taken refuge, "I never saw you do that before. You have been a respectful—"

"Well, I don't feel respectful now," said the boy, furiously. "How can I respect you when I see every

Tom, Dick, and Harry pulling the wool over your eyes?"

"Our interview is at an end," said the Judge, "and if you will step back a little I will move toward the door. I am sure that upon thinking this matter over you will see an apology is due to me."

Titus sulkily dragged himself from the room. With a sinking of the heart the Judge noticed that his limp was more perceptible than usual.

"Grandson," he called after him.

Titus turned round. His grandfather's face was glowing.

"How can you ever think for an instant," said the Judge, "that any boy or any girl can take the place of my only dear child?"

Titus's sullen face melted.

"I want to make a noble man of you, my boy," continued the older man, advancing with both hands outstretched. "I want you to have a great, generous heart, to get out into the huge world and make thousands of souls happy. You cannot expect all those souls to be responsive. You have got to make them happy, in spite of themselves; and how can you hope to influence thousands when you shrink from only one, and only a slightly uncongenial soul, at your own fireside? O, my dear grandson, love everybody, love everybody!"

It would have taken a sterner soul than Titus's to resist such words, such ambitious and loving affection.

"Grandfather," he said, slowly, "I'm sorry."

The Judge caught his outstretched hand. "My dear boy," he said, "my dear boy," and he pressed

the black head to his heart. "My *own* dear boy."

Titus uttered a grunt of delight, and ran away. That *own* was for him. Fifty thousand English boys could not come between him and his grandfather.

"Hello, chickie," he said, catching up Bethany and her big school bag as they appeared in the doorway. "Hello, chickie," and he carried her and the bag up the first of the long staircases.

Laughing and catching her breath with delight, Bethany, after she was set down on her feet, threw a kiss after Titus and then mounted the next staircase to her room.

Titus, pursuing a joyous pilgrimage to the stable, encountered Higby, and gave the old fellow a playful dig in the ribs, which sent him into his pantry with a crease of delight forming itself about his lips. Mrs. Blodgett, pursing her lips over a spoiled pudding, was restored to good humor by a playful pinch and a teasing "Hello, Blodgieblossom!" She forgot to scold further, and Martha the cook bent over the dish in question with a relieved smile.

Dashing through the kitchen, Titus tossed Jennie's apron under the table, then scampered out to tease and comfort Roblee.

Bethany, as usual, hurried to put away her things, then, kneeling on a chair before her big basin, she washed her little face and hands and trotted downstairs to have her before-luncheon chat with the Judge and the pigeon.

It was astonishing how little waiting on the child required. The Judge had been ready and willing

to engage a youthful maid to attend her, but Mrs. Blodgett had begged him not to do so, saying that an extra servant would only be in the way, and that Bethany really required such a small amount of attention that any of the present maidservants felt it a pleasure to give it to her. Therefore Bethany had a small room all to herself between Mrs. Blodgett's and Dallas's.

Not finding the Judge in his study, Bethany devoted herself to the princess.

"I have been learning a new song about you," she said, prettily. "Now, listen," and taking her red dress in her hands she made a little curtsy and began:

"This is the birdie I love the best,
This is the Sukey I love to caress,
This is the birdie I love the best,
This is my darling Sukey."

In the midst of her bowing and singing the Judge came into the room. Sukey was standing with one claw uplifted, a pair of attentive eyes fixed on Bethany, and an expression that seemed to say, "Very pretty, indeed; please sing some more."

"Where did you learn that, little girl?" inquired the Judge.

"I just changed it, Daddy Grandpa," said Bethany, wheeling round. "It is really and truly a dolly song, but I put in 'birdie.'"

The Judge was looking intently at her. Was she not going to inquire about the English boy? She had known that he was ill when she went to school.

"Don't you want to know how Dallas is?" he said, suggestively.

"O, yes, poor Dallas. Is he a sick boy yet?"

"No, he is better. He is going to stay here, Bethany."

She looked up quickly. "To be your other boy—the boy you were looking for when you found me?"

"Yes—exactly so."

She made no reply, but, sitting down in the little rocking-chair that the Judge kept in his study for her, she thoughtfully took Sukey on her lap and began to stroke her pretty hood.

"Are you glad?" inquired the Judge.

"I would rather have had Charlie Brown," she said, frankly. "Couldn't the Browns take Dallas, and let us have Charlie?"

The Judge did not reply. What a mysterious thing was child nature. Bethany was sweet and kind with Dallas, but she did not like him as she did Titus and Charlie Brown.

What was it about the English boy that did not harmonize with the natures of either Bethany or Titus? It could not be a racial difference, for the boy was half American. Probably Bethany and Titus, being essentially honest, felt that there was something about the stranger that was hidden from them. They did not quite trust him. Now, if Dallas were to turn over a new leaf and try to be strictly honorable, to try to mean just what he said, their slight aversion might change to real liking.

"Daddy Grandpa," asked Bethany, suddenly, "must I call Dallas 'Brother'?"

"Yes, you must," said the Judge, firmly. He would do his best to reconcile these strong young natures.

Bethany's face became dreamy. Her fingers stopped stroking the pigeon; she was wandering off into her spirit land as she often did when things in her material world went contrary with her.

The Judge, who had been standing watching her, walked back and forth, and finally extended his promenade to the hall.

When he approached the doorway or entered the study he could catch sentences from Bethany.

"Yellow, spotted dog, you must not bite clothes. Be a good, gentle dog, or boys will throw stones at you. Brick, will you let poor doggie sleep in your hogshead to-night? He is lonely all by himself."

"So the colored boy slept in a hogshead," murmured the Judge.

"Hark," said Bethany, suddenly, "I hear his bark, his sweet, sweet bark. O, my dear Bylow, my lovely spotted dog, I could hug you."

The Judge, happening to be near the hall window, and happening to hear a dog bark, instinctively looked out.

To his amazement a colored boy with a dog was passing on the opposite side of the street—and the dog was spotted.

"Bethany," he said, suddenly, "is your colored boy very black?"

She threw up her little head, and, losing her thoughtful expression, came back to earth. "No, sir; Brick is a kind of a red-brown boy—like bricks. That is why the boys called him Brick."

The Judge involuntarily stretched out a hand. He felt like hailing the dirty-looking mulatto boy now getting out of sight.

"There goes Bylow again," exclaimed Bethany, "hear his sweet little voice, Sukey."

The Judge started. The dog in the street had just uttered a succession of barks as he turned the corner—most unmelodious and ugly barks, to tell the truth, but then Bethany's geese were all swans.

"Child," he said, "I thought that dog was a ghost dog."

"So he is a ghost dog," she remonstrated, gently, "but don't you know I told you he was a real dog, too. He isn't dead. He is only losted."

"And when he barked just now was he barking as a ghost or a real dog?"

"He is a ghost," she said, thoughtfully, "because I never see him in the streets now, but I guess his bark must have been real—it sounded so *naturelle*. Perhaps he is in the air," and she looked up at the ceiling.

The Judge laughed and resumed his walk, but the dog question interested him considerably, especially later on when he took to meeting the same colored boy about town with a spotted dog at his heels. The dog had yellow eyes, and the Judge, knowing that if the boy remained in Riverport it would only be a question of time as to his meeting with Bethany, shuddered and shrank within himself, for he knew what the little girl would do.

CHAPTER XIII

HIGBY AND THE OWLS

UNTIL the coming of Bethany and Dallas the Judge had never seen Titus in contact with other boys and girls.

The boy had been brought up alone; when he wanted playmates he went abroad to seek them. He very seldom brought a boy home to play with him. The Judge had often remarked this, and had attributed the absence of children from his own house as an outward sign of Mrs. Blodgett's inward dislike of "clutter." However, since his adoption of Bethany and Dallas he had noticed that boys and girls came about the house quite freely.

There was therefore some other reason for their previous absence; and in his new interest in boy and girl study he decided that one child alone in a home is not a sufficient nucleus for a play place. He cannot gather round himself as great a variety of interests as several children can.

Another thing the Judge marveled at was the amazing strength of youthful character. Titus when alone had been submissive, patient, self-effacing. As soon as these other children had been introduced into the house he became self-assertive, particular as to his rights, and yet not disagreeable.

Even little Bethany had a strong character. Little men and women—grown people in miniature, the Judge often thought to himself as he gazed at the three young heads about his table.

Dallas' success as a member of his family had so far exceeded his most sanguine expectations. The Judge had written a rather amusing letter to Mr. Folsom on the subject of his adoption of the boy, and had told him firmly that although he was keeping Dallas he was to be the last child of adoption. He wished no others. Alas! the Judge was no prophet.

Mr. Folsom, in his delight, had come to Riverport, and had had a three-days' visit at the Judge's and many long conversations with Dallas. The Judge could not but acknowledge that Dallas was in part a changed boy. He could not expect him to make himself over all at once, but the lad was certainly more sincere. He was still polite, exceedingly polite, but he did not bore himself and other people by doing things that were against his nature.

For instance, he had given up his ceaseless companionship of Titus. The two went their respective ways. They did not quarrel, neither did they harmonize and to the Judge's amusement they even went to school at separate times.

If there was a question of championship Titus was at Dallas' side, and one day the Judge did hear a species of altercation between the two boys—an altercation that had ended in a reconciliation. Titus had Dallas penned in a corner out in the garden under the Judge's study balcony.

"Look here, if you don't try to drop your blamed

old English accent I'll stop fighting for you," he said. "I 'most got my nose broken to-day. Can't you say 'fast'? It isn't 'fost.'"

"Fast, fast," said Dallas, submissively.

"Now say 'last.'"

Dallas said "last" and "mast" and many other words, until at last he got out of patience and rebelled. "I don't want to lose my English accent. I am proud of being English."

"Then you do your own fighting," said Titus, furiously.

"What makes you think I can't fight," said Dallas, and his pale cheeks grew pink. "I'm taller than you."

"Taller," sneered Titus; "you're soft like a stick of candy."

He began his sentence on his feet, but finished it on his back in a bank of snow.

He was up like a flash and standing before Dallas, who was ejaculating, "You little black lead pencil."

Titus's wrath was all gone, to the Judge's amazement, and he was gurgling in his throat: "How did you do it? Teach me that trick—come on, Dallas, teach me."

The English boy's contempt faded, and he smiled complacently at the changed face before him.

"I will tell you something," he said, grandly. "Once my father was to figure in a wrestling match on the stage. Now, he was a good all-round athlete, but he was not satisfied with himself. We were in New York at the time. You have heard of Billy McGee, the trainer?"

Titus caught his breath. "O, yes—yes."

"Well, he got Billy McGee to come and train him. It cost a fearful sum, but father gave it. Billy taught my father, and my father taught me. So you needn't fight my battles any more."

Titus's face was glowing. "I say," and he linked his arm in Dallas's, "tell me some of those tricks of throwing. I don't know a thing."

The Judge groaned. The boys were walking away together arm in arm. "O, this glorification of brute strength," he muttered, "the bane of the rising generation," and holding out a finger to the pigeon, who was bowing and cooing to him, he stepped into the house. He must talk to these boys on the subject of fighting, and seating himself in his favorite chair he began to prepare a fatherly or grandfatherly speech.

Bethany came in and, seeing that he did not wish to be disturbed, sat down on the rug with Sukey.

Higby brought in the afternoon mail, and with a stifled yawn laid it on the table and departed.

Poor old Higby! He was a very early riser, and at the close of every day he began to get sleepy, and immediately after the seven o'clock dinner of the household he retired to his room. Jennie, the parlor maid, took upon herself his duty of going to the hall door when there was a ring.

On this particular day the Judge composed his speech, then went down to dinner with Bethany. Somewhat to his dismay, somewhat to his relief, and just a little to his amusement, Titus and Dallas came to the table like two brothers. Their eyes were on each other, their attentions were for

each other; they scarcely saw the Judge and Bethany.

Ah! the enthusiasm of youth, and shaking his head the Judge requested them both to accompany him to his study after dinner. Upon arriving there he talked to them very seriously on the evil of picking quarrels with other boys and the demoralizing effects of an appeal to brute force.

The boys were listening attentively and respectfully, when their minds were most forcibly withdrawn by a succession of blood-curdling shrieks from the floor above.

With one accord they all sprang to their feet and ran out to the hall.

"B-b-burglars! Th-th-thieves! F-f-fire! M-m-murderers!" rang out in stammering tones.

Poor old Higby, in the fine dressing-gown that the Judge had given him at Christmas, and in a pair of bedroom slippers to match that Mrs. Blodgett had made for him, was running downstairs, screaming at the top of his voice, and with eyes starting from his head.

"R-r-ring up the police," he went on, "c-c-catch them alive!"

"Higby," commanded the Judge, firmly, "calm yourself and tell us what is the matter."

The old man gained some degree of composure upon arriving in the hall and seeing himself surrounded by friends.

"They 'm-m-most killed me," he said, wildly, stepping up and down and clasping his head with his hands. "They t-t-tried to dig their knives in me, but I r-r-ran like a fox."

Though considerably older than the Judge, his head was not white, but was covered with a thin crop of grizzled hair.

"O, blood!" he moaned, miserably, bringing down one hand and extending it toward the Judge, "blood! blood!"

There were red streaks on his hands, and the Judge looked at them seriously.

"Higby, begin from the first. What has happened to you?"

The man began to step backward and to stammer violently.

"S-s-sir, I was in m-m-my room, b-b-back through the upper hall in the L."

"Turn him round, some one," called Mrs. Blodgett, who was hurrying up from below. "He's backing downstairs."

Titus sprang forward, took him by the sleeve, and led him past the group of frightened maids to a safe corner by the hall window.

From there he went on with his story.

"W-w-was in m-m-my room in my bed, s-s-sound asleep, d-dreaming of home and m-m-mother. S-s-sir," and he turned to the Judge, "w-w-we lived in a little house b-b-by a running brook, n-n-near a w-w-wood. I woke up, s-s-sir, c-c-crying. Then I heard a s-s-sound, sir, l-l-like the sounds of o-o-old times."

"Well?" said the Judge, encouragingly.

"I-I-I got up, sir; I put on m-m-my gown a-a-and s-s-slippers; I-I-I went out in the h-h-hall, sir."

"And what happened?"

"Th-th-the burglars must h-h-have been waiting,

s-s-sir. They j-j-jumped on me from behind. Th-th-they struck me on the h-h-head with their sharp knives, s-s-sir."

"Did you see them?" asked the Judge, sharply.

"I-I-I thought I saw one, sir. He was all in b-b-black, sir, and he d-d-dug his knife in me."

The Judge looked mystified. If it had been the middle of the night he would have believed Higby's story, but early in the evening he could not for a moment suppose that any thieves would rush out and attack a person who was simply walking along a hall. However, he turned to the boys.

"Come upstairs with me and we will make a thorough search."

"Wait a minute, please, sir," said Dallas. "May I ask Higby what the sound was that drew him from his bed?"

"T-t-the sound of owls, sir," stammered Higby, "of little ow-ow-owls sittin' on the trees an' hootin.'"

Dallas gave Titus a queer look, and the latter immediately burst out laughing.

"'Pon my word; poor old Higby," gasped Titus. "You've been fooled."

The manservant looked at him indignantly, while Dallas turned to the Judge, who was waiting for an explanation.

"You told me not to keep my birds so closely, sir, so I let them do pretty much as they please. I open my window every night at dusk. They must have got in through some other window into the hall. It is a habit of owls to pounce on anything furry or hairy."

"I know that," said the Judge, with a hearty laugh. "I've heard of their descending on the fur caps of hunters. Well! well! poor old Higby," and he turned to him. "Come, now, get over your fright. Those were only little birds that attacked you—Master Dallas's little owls."

Higby was in a speechless rage. He did not dare to get angry with the Judge, but he did not for a moment believe that his assailant had been a bird.

"Come, come," said the Judge, humoring him; "to satisfy you we will make a search."

Quite a procession moved up the stairway—the Judge, holding Bethany's hand, in advance, the two boys and the servants following.

Upon arriving in the upper hall and traversing it to the L beyond, where the servants' bedrooms were over the kitchen and pantries, Dallas kept looking sharply about.

One peculiarity of the Judge was that he liked plenty of light. At night the electric lights were turned on in every hall and every room, whether occupied or not.

"I do not see the culprits," said Dallas, "but I will call," and he gave a tentative "Too whoo, whoo, whoo whoo!"

"Too whoo, whoo, whoo whoo," said two little soft voices near them.

Dallas stuck his head out a window. "Ah, there are the miscreants, sitting on the limb of that tree."

The branches of the big, leafless old elm brushed the hall window, and the little owls sitting there were calmly contemplating a rising moon.

The Judge let Bethany look at them, then he

said: "See, Higby, there are your burglars. There are no traces of any others here. No man would be bold enough to pass through this lighted house, and if he did why should he attack you?"

"I-I-I saw him," burst from Higby, "a b-b-big black man."

The Judge looked down at Bethany. She was tightly clasping his hand, and the expression of her face was doubtful.

"They were owls that attacked you, Higby," he said, decidedly; "don't let me hear any more nonsense about a burglar. Come downstairs, children," and he turned about.

Bethany would not let go his hand, even when they entered the study.

"I will read aloud a little to compose her thoughts before she goes to bed," the Judge reflected. "No fairy tales to stimulate her imagination, but something that she will not understand," and he took from his bookshelves a volume of Milton's works.

He seated himself by the table, drew his reading light toward him, and began. After a time he looked down at the little figure sitting on the stool at his feet.

"I suppose you don't understand this, Bethany," he said, patronizingly.

"O, don't speak, don't speak, Daddy Grandpa," she said, impatiently; "please go on."

She had lifted her head. Her face had lost its dreamy expression. It was glowing, radiant, and intensely interested. The Judge went on mechanically:

“‘There the companions of his fall, o’erwhelmed
With floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire—’”

Why, the child was understanding what he read, he reflected with surprise, or, rather, she was putting her own interpretation upon it.

“Bethany,” he asked after a time and slowly closing the book, “what do you make of all this?”

“O, I think,” she said, eloquently, “that Satan must be the father of that bad black man that struck Higby, and his home must be in the fiery gulf.”

The Judge smiled. “Bethany, those were Dallas’s owls that attacked Higby. There was no black man there.”

“But, Daddy Grandpa,” she said, incredulously, “little birds could not be so bad.”

“I fear they were bad, Bethany. Birds are not all good. They are like children. Some are good, some bad; but come, it is your bedtime.”

“It doesn’t feel my bedtime,” she said, quickly.

“But it is. Little girls ought to get to bed early.”

“Sometimes I sat up late when my mamma was alive,” she said, coaxingly.

“I think you would better go,” said the Judge.

“There is no one up there that I know,” she replied, drearily.

“How about Ellen and Susie; you tell me they live in the wall beside your bed.”

“They have gone to the country to see the place where they are buried,” she said, quickly.

The Judge was silent. Sometimes his studies of childhood mystified him. Just now he was afraid that Higby’s foolish story had caused this hereto-

fore fearless child suddenly to become afraid to go upstairs to bed.

While he was thinking she silently caressed the pigeon, which had hopped up into her lap, but after a time she put up one of her tiny hands and convulsively seized his large one. "Daddy Grandpa, read some more. You have a honey voice."

The Judge smiled broadly, then he took up a magazine from the table. What would best put a little girl to sleep? Ah! the political situation in the far East, and this time Bethany did go to sleep. Her head was against his knee so he could not move, but through the doorway he hailed Dallas, who was coming out of the sitting room opposite, where he and Titus prepared their lessons.

"Dallas, send Mrs. Blodgett here."

"Mrs. Blodgett," he said, when she came puffing up the stairway and stood before him, "have a bed moved in this little girl's room and let one of the maids sleep there in future. I don't think that it is good for her to be alone so much."

Mrs. Blodgett nodded her head. "Just what I've been a-thinkin', sir. I'm willin', I'm sure, to take her in my own room next door."

"No, no; you need your sleep," said the Judge. "You are getting older, and you have brought up one family. Let one of the girls attend to this child."

"She do talk a lot to herself in her room, sir. I hears her laughin' and chattin' with them two blessed little girls of yours."

"Doesn't she talk of other children?" asked the Judge.

“O, bless you, yes, sir, an’ she also talks to tables, an’ chairs, an’ carpets, an’ that ghost mouse. She do have a name for everything in her room, an’ you’d think she had a whole menagerie to hear her growl an’ bark.”

“Must be the spotted dog,” said the Judge to himself with a smile, and he again took up his magazine.

Mrs. Blodgett waddled away. “Sure an’ it’s a wonderful thing how at his age he do take on the ways of a family man. He ought to ‘a’ had a dozen children.”

The Judge was instinctively a model person at managing children. To begin with, he loved them; and to end with, he did not fuss over them. Just now he was becoming intensely uncomfortable on account of this solid little lump against his slightly rheumatic knee. If he took her up and laid her on the sofa he might wake her, so he gave her a cautious little push. She gently rolled over. He guided her head and assisted the indignant pigeon to fly away. Now Bethany was comfortably stretched on the floor sleeping soundly, her pretty mouth wide open, after the fashion of civilized children.

The Judge had heard of Indian mothers closing the mouths of their babes, so he bent over and gently brought the child’s lips together. To his delight they stayed closed, and with a sigh of relief he stretched out his long legs, took up his magazine, and looked enjoyably about him before he went on with his reading.

He was intensely fond of his books; indeed, read-

ing was almost a passion with him, and the evening hours were the pleasantest part of the day.

Work was over, the children were safely in the house—for since Titus's accident he always had a little anxiety about boys and girls absent from their own rooftrees—and he was free to amuse himself in this most delightful of ways.

Alas for the Judge! He had not read five sentences when he heard a shrill, insistent voice, not in this upper hall, but in the one below, away down by the front door.

"I tell you I must see the Judge. I hev'n't got no message."

Strange to say, the voice, which was shrill and uncultured rather than noisy, woke Bethany like the sound of a trumpet.

Instantly rousing herself she sat up and looked composedly at the Judge. There was not the slightest sign of confusion about her, or any bewildered look as of a child hastily aroused from sleep.

"Daddy Grandpa," she said, quickly, "I'm the yellow spotted dog," and beginning to growl and snap horribly she went down on hands and feet and crawled under a big table in a corner—a favorite play place because it had a long, heavy cover whose sheltering folds concealed a castle, a ship, a railway train, an ogre's cavern, or any other fancy that Bethany chose to indulge in.

The Judge looked after her submissively. His part was not to rebel, but to await developments.

Then he turned his head to the doorway.

"Sir," said Jennie, in a puzzled voice, "there's a little poor girl craving to see you."

"Bring her up," said the Judge, promptly, and he tried to think where he had heard that shrill voice before.

Two minutes later he knew, for Airy Tingsby, the smart, pert girl, the head of the Tingsby clan, and the one who had been so saucy and impertinent to him, now stood within a few feet of his chair.

CHAPTER XIV

A CALL FROM AIRY

THE Judge was a gentleman, and he was in his own house, so he got up, motioned her to a seat, and said, politely, "Good-evening."

"Good-night," she said, curtly, then she looked about her.

O, the bitter envy and discontent of her face! The Judge averted her eyes. It was not pleasant to see that expression on the face of a child, for she was scarcely more.

"Why hev you got all this?" she said, suddenly, "and why hev I nothin'?"

The Judge made no reply except that of a mournful shake of his head.

"And why," she went on, leaning eagerly forward from her chair and pinching the thin sleeve of her jacket, "do I hev to wear shoddy cloth an' you wear broadcloth?"

"Only Oxford cloth," said the Judge, protestingly, "only Oxford in this house suit."

"How much did you pay for it?" she asked, grimly.

He made no reply, and she continued. "How much did you lay out on that diamond neck pin; how much did your house cost and this fine furniture?"

The Judge discreetly evaded an answer by a protesting wave of his hand, and at the same time thought that a few months previous to this he would have bowed the saucy little girl from the room. Now, although he wanted to get back to his reading, and he gazed wistfully at the heap of new literature on his table, he was really anxious to hear what the girl had to say. Something lay under this—so much he had learned of youthful ways. How the little wretches understood that he was interested in their confidences. They were as sharp as grown people.

“My girl,” he said, kindly, “what have you come here for?”

Before she answered him she pointed half angrily, half curiously at Sukey. “What’s that, an’ what’s it starin’ at me for, like as if I had no right to be here?”

The pigeon, to the Judge’s amusement, had resented Airy’s entrance as much as Bethany had done, but instead of retreating she advanced, stepping high, and curling each pink claw with indignation. The look on her high-bred face was delicious, coming from a pigeon. Her greenish-yellow eyes were stony, every feather in her hood quivered and seemed to close more protectingly about the little white head.

Once or twice before, the Judge had seen her act so in the presence of poor people, and he had laid her indignation down to a sense of smell, like that of the average dog, who hates a poor or dirty person. But Airy was a very clean child. The Judge knew what kind of a mother Mrs. Tingsby was,

so his theory of smell would scarcely hold good in this case.

Possibly Sukey was sympathizing with Bethany, whom she had got to love devotedly. Anyway, the Judge must answer the child, so he said, kindly, "The bird is a pigeon; she is called a Jacobin."

"She's an ugly thing, anyway," replied Airy, sulkily, "an' she hates me. Shoo!" and she clapped her hands.

The indignant Sukey, who was no heroine, turned tail and scuttled under Bethany's table, where the Judge heard a low growl of welcome greet her. Then, his two pets safely disposed of, he looked expectantly at Airy, hoping that she would remember his question as to her motive for calling on him.

She did remember, and, sinking back in her chair with a weary gesture, she said, "I've come to tell you that I wants to be a lady."

"Poor child!" murmured the Judge, involuntarily. Then he tried to realize the enormity of the question thrust upon him.

"Why warn't I born a lady?" pursued Airy, uncompromisingly. "Why warn't I born your darter?"

"Well," said the Judge, hesitatingly, "well, I suppose it pleased Providence to place you in another sphere."

"Sphere!" she repeated, sneeringly, "that's no word I ever heard. 'Pears to me you rich folks make up words to suit yourselves. But if I don't know 'sphere,' I do not know one word, an' that's 'Fiddlesticks!'"

"Well," replied the Judge, with a polite move-

ment of his head, "your word is a good old English one used by Southey, Thackeray, and others, though I believe it is unknown just how and why it became an expression of contempt."

"I don't know what you're drivin' at," replied Airy, wearily, "but I'm goin' to say my proposition over again: I wants to be a lady!"

The Judge, having heard the announcement before, bore it this time with fortitude.

"An' what's more," she went on, "I wants you to help me."

"What can I do?" inquired the Judge, in mild surprise.

"You can gab a bit with me now an' then," she said, earnestly. "Why, I took to you the first time I see you."

"Did you," replied the Judge. "Well—ahem!—I fancied that you were not much taken with me."

"I was mad with you," she said, frankly, "mad because I figgered that you was returnin' Bethany on us. Then I was mad to think you didn't get mad."

"Do you get mad easily?"

"Awful easy. I'm mad 'most all the time. You see, I'm kind of sickly, an' I hev'n't much relish for what I eats, an' nothin' makes you mad like pickin' at yer food."

"Poor child!" said the Judge, sympathetically.

"But I'm goin' to be a lady," she said, and her little sharp face hardened, "if I lives. If I dies it don't matter."

She was silent for a few seconds, being employed

in a search among her patched and darned but clean garments for a rag of a handkerchief, as white as the morsel of linen peeping from the Judge's own pocket.

"And what steps have you taken in the matter?" inquired the Judge, knowing that he was expected to take an interest in this question of ladyhood.

"Fust of all, I've quit work," she replied. "What air you laughin' at?" for the Judge was unable to conceal his amusement.

"Just at the idea of a lazy lady," he replied; "go on, please."

"Did I say I was goin' to be lazy?" she returned, fiercely. "I've just stopped shopgirlin' it, but I'm a-studyin' like sixty."

"O, going to school?"

"Yes, sir. Onct before I went, before I got into Moses & Brown's big Dry Goods Emporium—all the latest fashions in ladies' neckwear, underwear, street wear, house wear, weddin' wear, funeral wear, summer wear, winter wear, an' so on."

The Judge drew a long breath. "Indeed!"

"Yes, I'm a-schoolin' it. I tell you, when I saw where Bethany had come, an' when that boy of yours come hurryin' down River Street with books an' things for us an' hurryin' off again like as we was poisoned, I begun to think, 'It's time I was lookin' higher.'"

A doubtful expression passed over the Judge's face, but instead of resenting it she went hurriedly on: "So the next time Barry Mafferty comes in, says I to him, 'Barry, I wants to be a lady.' Says he, 'Then quit yer shop an' go to school, an' I'll teach

you Latin an' French, 'cause you'll not get them in the fust grades of the public.' An' he gave me a book. I can say *mensa* now—*mensa, mensæ, mensæ, mensam, mensa, mensa. Mensæ, mensarum, mensis, mensas, mensæ, mensis.* An' *musa*, too," and she glibly rattled off the declension of *musa*.

"And do you know what *musa* means?" inquired the Judge, somewhat helplessly, when she at last paused for want of breath.

"*Musa*, amuse," she replied, quickly.

"And what is a muse?" pursued the Judge.

"You don't know what amuse is at your time of life!" she said, sharply. "Come on, now, you're just foolin' me."

"Ask Mafferty to tell you about the Muses the next time you go to him," said the Judge. "At present you have a wrong idea of the meaning of the word."

"Hev I?" she said, sharply. "I'll find out better. Want to hear some French?"

"If you like," replied the Judge, politely.

"*Javvey, tavvey, lavvey, nouzaviong, vouzaviez, ilzong.* Do you know what that means?"

"I can guess," replied her friend, calmly.

"You want ter laugh," she said, suddenly; "you're bustin', I can see, but wait till I'm gone. I hate to be larfed at."

The Judge guiltily hung his head.

"Now," she said, in a businesslike way, "I don't want yer for teachin' me French nor langwidges, nor grammar. What I wants is ladyness from yer. Come on, now, what's the fust thing in bein' a lady?"

She was intensely, terribly in earnest, and the Judge braced up.

"Well," he said, seriously, "first of all, before I can give you one single word of advice, I want to know what you intend to make of young ladyhood—providing you attain to it."

"Don't understand all yer big words," she said, "but I catches yer meanin'. What do I want to be a lady for? I wants to be a lady so as to make you an' other men stand round."

"Very good," murmured the Judge; "but go on, pray."

"What does you care for me now?" she said, disdainfully. "My name's mud to you. I'm a River Street rat. Aint it so?"

"Well," said the Judge, in a puzzled voice, "you are so extreme that I will have to qualify your statement."

"It's true," she said, grimly, "you 'spises me. That makes me mad, 'cause I know the Lord made us both. That my mother has taught me, an' I believe her. The Lord loves me as much as he loves you, but that don't satisfy me. I'm goin' to make you love me, too."

The Judge shuddered, despite himself. This little sharp-voiced, bad-tempered, ambitious, plain-featured specimen of humanity was extremely repellent to him. It was really an act of Christian charity on his part to sit and listen to her.

But he must subdue his dislike. The poor little creature was unhappy. If he sent her away uncomforted and unaided he would have a sleepless night. Happily or unhappily for himself, he had so hu-

mored his conscience through life that he was obliged slavishly to obey its dictates or suffer the consequences.

Therefore he said, kindly, "What other object have you in becoming a lady besides that of making men stand round?"

"I wants to help my mother," she said, solemnly, "an' get her out of River Street. I wants a little home out among the fields for her where the 'lectrics run past an' she can come in town fer her shoppin'. She's a faithful mother, sir; she's brought us up good."

The Judge's eyes filled with tears. Poor little, weak, frail creature, and yet not weak, for a noble spirit animated her sickly body.

"Now I am with you, my girl," he exclaimed. "Now I will help you, for this aspiration is noble."

The touch of sympathy caused a smile to break over her face. "An' the children, sir," she said, "could play. There's grass out there where they could play. There aint no grass on River Street."

"Don't they play in the park that Mrs. Everest got for the River Street children?"

"O, yes, sir, but there be so many feet an' so little grass. It's all tramped down afore it has time to grow. Now, sir, please tell me, for I must be goin', what is the fust thing, in your opinion, to be a lady?"

The Judge considered a minute, then he said: "Let us take your call in sections. When you came in the house I heard your voice away up here shrill and insistent. Now, what was there unladylike about that?"

"I ought to 'a' spoke low," she said, eagerly, "soft an' low."

"A real lady always speaks in a sweet voice, my child. Don't scream when talking."

"The real ladies did that when they come a-shop-pin'," she replied. "They said, 'Please show me some white lace,' jus' as soft as milk."

"Then take that as your first rule," said the Judge. "Pitch your voice low. Next I would say that your manner was aggressive when you came in."

"An' what are you tryin' to give me there?" she said, quickly. "What's aggressive?"

The Judge was intensely amused. Her words were rude, but so well had she remembered his advice that her voice was pitched in a low, almost a sweet, key.

"Rule two," he observed, "be respectful. Now, I am a much older person than you. You should not address me in the rude, flippant tone in which you address a street urchin. But I am perhaps wrong here. In the course of my life I have observed how popular are the persons who have respect for everyone—even their own servants. One human being has no right to treat another human being with disrespect. Just wait a minute and I will give you an object lesson," and getting up he rang the bell.

Presently there was a knock at the door.

"You hear that?" he said to Airy. "The maid knocks at the door of this room because it is not a public but a private room. She knocks at our bedroom doors also. She does not knock at the dining room or the parlor door. That is one way of being

respectful. Now see how politely she will answer me when she enters," and he said in a clear voice, "Come in."

Jennie stepped inside and stood in her neat gown and white apron looking expectantly at him.

"Has a parcel come for me this evening from the druggist's?" inquired the Judge.

"Yes, sir, quite a large parcel. Would you like to have it here?"

"No, thank you; in my bedroom."

"Very well, sir. Is that all?"

"Yes, Jennie; but no—go to the sitting room and ask Master Dallas to come here."

"Certainly, sir," and with a pleasant look she closed the door and went away.

The Judge looked at Airy. Her lips were parted, her eyes were intense.

"Now you will see a polite, respectful boy," he said, and at that instant there was another knock at the door.

"Come in," said the Judge, and Dallas appeared.

"My boy," said the Judge, "this young girl is a daughter of a woman who was very kind to Bethany."

Dallas turned to Airy and made her such an exquisite bow that she caught her breath and gasped, "O, my!"

The Judge bit his lip. "Miss Airy Tingsby and Mr. Dallas de Warren. Now you will know each other the next time you meet. How have you been getting on with your studies this evening, Dallas?"

"Very well, sir, though perhaps not as well as

usual, on account of the Higby affair. It amused Titus."

"Will you give Miss Airy an account of it?" said the Judge. "It is not polite for two persons to talk before a third of something that he or she does not understand."

In a perfectly calm and courteous way Dallas, without appearing to notice that his new acquaintance belonged to one of the poorest classes in society, gave her an account of the unfortunate Higby's fright.

Airy hung on his words in entranced silence. Never before in her young life had anyone addressed her with so much deference. A delightful sensation ran through her veins. She could have sat till midnight listening to that mellifluous voice.

"And now we must not keep you," said the Judge, when Dallas, having finished his recital, turned to him. "By the way, though, what are you reading in Latin just now?"

"The first book of the *Æneid*, sir."

"You find it interesting?"

"Intensely so, sir. *Æneas* had so many adventures."

"This young girl is also studying Latin," said the Judge. "Airy, can you decline *mensa* for Dallas?"

In a low, gentle voice, and with a manner so full of caution that it was almost terrified, Airy got through her task with credit to herself and her friend. Dallas listened politely and showed not a sign of a smile.

After she finished he thanked her, and then turned to the Judge again, who dismissed him by a smile.

"I will say good-night, sir," said Dallas, "then I will not need to disturb you later on."

"Very well, good-night," and the Judge extended a hand.

Dallas shook hands with him, bowed to Airy, and left the room.

The little girl drew a long breath and rose to her feet. "I've had enough for to-night. Sir, if ever I get rich and you get poor, just you come to me an' I'll help you."

The Judge smiled mournfully. Poor child—how easy to bridge the gulf between them by words, and yet she was an apt pupil.

"You are a little girl to be out alone in the evening," he said. "By the way, how old are you?"

"Thirteen, sir; 'most fourteen."

"How are you going to get home?"

"Some one is waitin' for me, sir, across the street. He's a boy does odd jobs for us. When can I come agin, sir?" she went on, eagerly.

"When would you like to come?"

"Say this night week, sir. I'll hev to shine up my manners till then. My! but it'll be hard not to yell in River Street. It's easy enough to be soft here, 'cause you've no one to yell at you."

"This night week, then," replied the Judge; "good-bye."

"Good-bye, sir," and to his amusement she awkwardly shook hands with him, then darted from the room like a bird.

"I'll have to teach her to go slowly next lesson," said the Judge, with a smile, and leisurely stepping into the hall he looked out of the window.

Airy was just joining her escort, or escorts, for there were two. To the Judge's dismay the electric light across the street shone full on the faces of Brick, the colored boy, and the spotted dog.

Both had probably spent the last hour in front of his house, and Bethany was only a few steps away. Suppose she had gone to the window; and retracing his steps the Judge went into his study and sitting down began to think over the visit he had just had.

The tablecloth waving violently attracted his attention. "Hello, little girl," he said, affectionately, "come out. Daddy Grandpa is alone."

There was no response beyond a continuance of low growling.

The Judge had made a mistake. It was not Bethany under the table; it was Bylow.

"Good dog," he said, "come here."

She immediately crawled out on all fours, snapping and snarling at every object she passed, and accompanied by Sukey, who also was in a bad temper and pecked at everything near her.

On Bethany's way to the Judge she suddenly caught sight of a piece of wrapping paper that had come round a book and had fallen to the floor. Seizing it in her hands, she tore it to pieces. The Judge thought that her small teeth also aided in the work of destruction. Not till the paper was in ribbons, and she herself was damp with perspiration from the violence of her emotion, did she give up her dog incarnation and become demure little Bethany again.

The Judge stared. He had never seen her in a

rage before. However, she was quite self-possessed now, and putting the grumbling pigeon in her basket and seating herself beside her she began softly to stroke and smooth her disturbed feathered friend.

After a time she addressed a gentle remark to the Judge over her shoulder. "So you have had 'Airy Mary, so contrary,' here this evening?"

"Yes, I have," he returned. "Why did you not stay out and see her; don't you like her?"

"Airy once slapped Bethany," she remarked, meditatively.

The Judge made no reply. Evidently the two girls were not affinities.

"Annie never slapped Bethany," the child presently remarked.

Annie, the Judge knew, was Mrs. Tingsby's second daughter. However, once more he did not feel called upon to give an expression of opinion, and Bethany went on: "To-night week I shall go to the country with Ellen and Susie."

The Judge rang the bell. "Jennie," he said, when the parlor maid appeared, "here is a little girl that wants to go to bed."

Bethany got up sweetly. She kissed Sukey good-night, then she went to the Judge and threw her arms round his neck. "Good-night, dear Daddy Grandpa."

"Good-night, my child," he responded, and as he spoke he felt how dear indeed the little affectionate, jealous creature had become to him.

She seemed to part from him with reluctance. However, she took Jennie's hand agreeably enough, but in the doorway she turned and fired a parting

shot that immensely amused the unfortunate man attacked.

"Daddy Grandpa," she said, sternly, "ladies is born, not made," then she disappeared with Jennie.

The Judge sat down in his big chair, alone at last with what remnant of calm these children had left him. Which was the more remarkable, Bethany or Airy? Bethany with her queer, old-fashioned, precocious, yet strangely childlike ways, or the bitter, repellent Airy?

How strange that through his life he had heard so little about child study! He must find out what books there were on the subject. However, books or no books, these children bade fair to make a psychologist of him.

CHAPTER XV

A DRIVE WITH THE JUDGE

A FEW days later the Judge stood at the foot of the staircase leading up to the children's rooms and inwardly wondered.

Bethany was kneeling down on the top step. "O, Lord, forgive me for what I am about to do," she prayed, piously; then she unclasped her hands and took in them a crumpled handkerchief.

The Judge still stared. She had her dress pinned up, a towel fastened round her waist, sleeves rolled back, and beside her on the step a little tin can and a cake of Hittaker's soap.

What was she going to do? and the Judge waited.

She was washing down the steps, and as she washed she softly sang to herself a homemade ditty:

"Ellen and Susie they're with me right here;
Wash little maid, wash the steppies so clear,
Wash for the Judge, and for Titus the boy,
So will you fill their dear hearts with joy."

"She is cleaning the steps," said the Judge to himself, "and is enjoying it. Mrs. Blodgett has probably gone downtown, and after asking the Lord to forgive her she has yielded to temptation. It would be a shame to interrupt, seeing she enjoys it so much," and with a broad smile on his face he sat down on the lowest step and waited.

As Bethany was coming down backward she did

not see him until her hand, going out sideways, deposited the tin pail on his knees.

"O!" she exclaimed, and giving a great start she straightened herself.

There were beads of perspiration on her forehead and upper lip, and her cheeks were flushed.

"There!" she said at last, and she gazed comically at the Judge, "I knew Satan would catch me."

"Thank you," he replied, quietly.

"O, Daddy Grandpa," she cried, repentantly, "you don't think I meant you—"

"What are you doing?" he asked, disregarding her question.

"Well," she said, wearily, "I saw a little dust on these steps at lunch time, and I've been just crazy to wash them, just crazy."

"What have you been doing it with?" he inquired.

She uncurled her hand, and showed the wet, crumpled handkerchief. "It's a very old one," she said, anxiously, "quite full of holes. I hadn't any cloth to dry the steps, so I just blew softly as I sang—I s'pose I've got to be punished," she said, miserably.

"Let me see first how you have done them," said the Judge, trying to speak sternly, and getting up he walked to the top of the staircase.

The child had done her work thoroughly. There was not a particle of dust to be seen. Every square inch not covered by carpet had been carefully cleaned.

"Well," he said, as he slowly came downstairs, "for punishment I order you to wash them down each day until further orders."

She gave him a roguish smile. "Now, Daddy Grandpa, you know that is no punishment. You are just pretending."

"Well," he went on, "as that would be no punishment, I order you for work, or play, or whatever you call it, to wash these steps down once a week, and for penalty you will not be allowed to go for a drive with me for three days."

Her eyes filled with tears. "Three days, Daddy Grandpa—not two, not one?"

"No, three," he said, decidedly, "three whole days."

She wiped her eyes with the towel about her waist. "The time will seem long, but I deserve it. I was very bad. Mrs. Blodgett has gone shopping, and I thought that you were asleep, and Satan tempted me. I thought he was laying a trap, but I gave in to him."

"Bethany," said the Judge, kindly, "you were wrong to do what was forbidden, but since you enjoy a little housework I will get Mrs. Blodgett to relax that rule, and give you some easy things to do."

"Daddy Grandpa," she said, seizing one of his large white hands and pressing it to her lips, "if you had wings you'd be an angel."

He smiled amiably, and went to get ready for his drive.

"O, little pail," said Bethany, seizing the tin, "O, little pail, I am glad he did not take you from me. I was afraid that would be my punishment."

"What are you talking about up there?" inquired the Judge from the hall below, where he was putting on his coat.

Bethany took a few steps forward and put her head over the balusters.

"I was just telling Bobby that I am glad you did not take him from me."

"And who is Bobby?"

"Bobby is one of the little pails we used to get our butter in. You know that poor people do not eat the kind of butter that you do, Daddy Grandpa. Ours was whiter, and it did not taste like Cloverdale butter. When we went to the grocer's I always said we were going to buy a Bobby of butter."

The Judge made no remark, but he wrinkled his forehead as he went to the hall door.

"A fowl in the pot for every man on Sunday," a good French king is reported to have said, and "Cloverdale butter for every citizen in Riverport," the good Judge wished in his heart.

He had a lonely drive. How much he enjoyed having the little prattler by his side! for Bethany talked a good deal when she was out with him. There were so many objects of interest to inquire about, and having perfect confidence in him she never failed to extend her fund of knowledge when with him. Poor little gropers after truth! How much the children had to learn! How many questions they must ask of the, to them, omniscient grown-up ones, before they were sufficiently equipped for the battle of life!

On the second day of Bethany's punishment the Judge, as he was going down to the sleigh, met Dallas on the front steps.

"It is a beautiful day," he said; "don't you want to come for a drive?"

A flush of pleasure crept over the boy's face.

"Yes, sir, very much; will you be good enough to wait till I put these books in the house?"

The Judge nodded, and Dallas ran into the house.

"How is it that you carry books?" inquired the Judge when he came out. "I never see Titus with any."

"He has a set at home and one in school," said Dallas, quietly, as they got into the sleigh.

"And why have not you the same?"

"I thought, sir, that it was sufficient for you to buy me one set. I carry mine."

The Judge was touched by this mark of the boy's thoughtfulness, and for a few minutes he said nothing. Then he turned round. "Buy another lot—have just what Titus has."

Dallas gave him a peculiar glance. It certainly was not an ungrateful one.

The Judge gazed at him more steadfastly. How well the boy looked in his heavy black coat and dark fur cap! He was stouter, too, than when he came. Already good living and freedom from care were beginning to show a favorable influence upon him. But what about the soul? And the Judge peered more earnestly than ever at him. A good outside was a fine thing, but the inner things of the heart were what counted, and the elderly man made up his mind to ask a few questions. However, at first he learned all he could from the exterior.

The boy sat beside him very quietly, but his face was proud. "Now that I think of it," reflected the Judge, "this is his first appearance in public with me.

This doffing of hats and bowing from well dressed people flatters his boyish vanity."

"Dallas," he said, aloud, "would you like to be popular?"

"Yes, sir," he replied, with a smile.

"And rich?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you believe that riches bring happiness?"

"No, sir."

"What do you want to be in life? Have you chosen a calling—a profession?"

The boy gave him a hesitating glance, and the Judge delicately changed his question. "Have you ever thought of being an actor, as your father was?"

The boy shuddered. "O, no, no!"

"Why not? Don't you approve of the profession?"

Dallas hesitated a minute, then he said, "It's not bad for those who get on; it's awful for those who don't."

"Would you put your father in the latter class?"

"Yes, sir, but in this way only. He had poor health. If he had been strong he would have made his mark. He had brains and application enough to succeed. With his last breath he begged me not to follow his profession. Even if I wished to do so, that would keep me from it."

The Judge made no comment, and presently Dallas went on: "I have been behind the scenes, sir. I suppose the public must have theaters, but they're hard on girls and young men."

"In what way?" asked the Judge, quietly.

"Well, sir," said the boy, bitterly, "when a person goes on the stage his or her home goes to smash."

The Judge made no reply, and Dallas went on with animation: "If I had my way, I'd have no army, no navy, no anything that took men out of their homes. I suppose you've always had a home, sir."

The Judge smiled.

"Then you don't know what it is to live in a boarding house—to share everything in common with people that you often despise. Why, sir, when I come home from school and go upstairs to that little sitting room where Titus and I study, and shut the door, and feel that it is ours, I am in paradise."

"But you have to come downstairs and eat and drink with the family," said the Judge, in amusement.

"Ah!" said the boy, with his handsome face aglow, "but you are my own people now. I like to be with you."

"Dallas," said the Judge, abruptly, "tell me what you would like to be when you become a man."

The boy grew somewhat less animated. "You won't be vexed with me for being too ambitious?" he said, hesitatingly.

"Not unless you aspire to the Presidency."

"Sir, I do not aspire to that, but I do wish to be a doctor."

"Ah! to study medicine—you are fond of your books. I see that."

"The only thing that troubles me," continued Dallas, with some embarrassment, "is that one's studies are long and expensive. I feel that I ought

to choose something like a clerkship, so I should not be so long a burden on you."

"You shall be a doctor," said the Judge, promptly. "You have done well to speak your mind frankly and honestly. How old are you now?"

"Sixteen, sir."

"Just two years older than Titus, though you are much taller. It is well for a boy to choose his vocation in life as early as possible. Then he can prepare for it. You know what Titus wishes to be?"

"Yes, sir—a farmer."

"I can't gainsay him. I believe in getting back to the soil. He wants a stock farm, and already I am beginning to get things in shape for him. Rob-lee," and the Judge spoke to the coachman, "drive out toward Cloverdale."

"I have bought a hundred and fifty acres of land," the Judge continued, "and have a young man in charge. We have not time to go all the way there to-day, but you will see in what direction it is. Have you been out this way before?"

"No, sir."

"Have you not been driving at all since you came to Riverport?"

"No, sir."

"How is that?"

"Well, Titus does not care for driving, as you know, and I did not care to ask."

"But you like it?"

"Indeed I do," he said, earnestly.

"Then you must often come with me and Bethany. Poor little soul, she is doing penance to-day."

"Yes, I saw her going for a walk with Jennie,

with a very downcast face," said Dallas with a slight smile. Then he fell into a reverie.

What a happy boy he was! What good fortune had been his when he fell into the hands of this kind, agreeable, yet strong man! How much he admired him! and he stole a glance at the Judge's quiet face.

They were gliding along over a country road now. How comfortable they were in their luxurious furlined seat, with warm robes over them, and their feet on the Judge's long foot-warmer! The sleigh was an open one, and on each side of them, and before and behind, they had an uninterrupted view of a beautiful, snow-covered country.

Occasionally they met a farmer jogging along on his wood-sled, or going swiftly in a single-seated sleigh behind a substantial, heavy-footed country horse. There were also a few sleighs from the city.

Everybody knew the Judge, and if a lady bowed to him Dallas, in suppressed delight, also saluted her by touching his fur cap. How he enjoyed recognition! When he was a man he would wish for no better enjoyment than this—to drive along the street and have everyone greet him with respect. But he must work hard for it at first, and he cast a side glance at the Judge's white head. Charlie Brown had told him that the Judge as a young man had worked like a slave to master the intricacies of commercial law, bankruptcy law, international law, criminal law, and many other kinds of law that Dallas could not remember. He would work, too, and he set his young mouth firmly and looked straight ahead.

The Judge was murmuring, "God made the country and man made the town"; then he said aloud, "Just look at the sun behind that grove of spruces, Dallas."

"Beautiful!" said the boy, and then the Judge, taking out his watch, said regretfully, "We must turn. Home, Roblee."

They scarcely spoke until they reached Grand Avenue. When they were slipping past the fine houses that bordered it Dallas turned to the Judge. "I thank you, sir, for this drive. I have enjoyed it immensely."

The Judge's keen eyes sought his face. "My boy," he said, kindly, and he stretched out one of his fur-clad hands and laid it on Dallas's knee, "you must often accompany me and the little girl on our daily drives."

The Judge's benevolent face was luminous in the setting sun. He was proving himself to be a real father to the boy. Something choked in Dallas's throat. He bent his head lower, lower, till a sudden ecstasy made him seize the Judge's hand and press it warmly in his own.

"Just look at that new boy of the Judge's," exclaimed Charlie Brown's mother as she stood at one of the upper windows of the house, staring at the Judge in adoration. "What is it about that man that makes everyone like him?"

"Good temper," growled her rather short-tempered spouse, who was sitting near her, his head buried in a newspaper.

Dallas's first drive with the Judge was on the first day of Bethany's punishment; his second one

was on the second day of retribution, and his third was on the day rendered ever memorable to the Judge by the fulfillment of one of his worst fears. He wished, but too late, that Bethany had had no punishment, that he had forgiven the sin of step-washing, and had taken her with himself and Dallas.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SPOTTED DOG AGAIN

THE Judge and the boy were just arriving gayly home from a most enjoyable drive. They had been driving, not in the direction of Cloverdale, but away down the frozen river as it silently wound toward the sea.

Dallas had sprung out of the sleigh, and was standing respectfully aside waiting for the Judge to alight, when the big hall door flew open and little Bethany appeared, being held back, however, by the protesting Jennie.

Her face was absolutely beatific, and she called out clearly, "O, Daddy Grandpa, I've got the joy-fullest surprise for you!"

The Judge, with an affectionate glance at her, began to ascend the steps in his usual dignified way.

"Now I have something to thank Satan for," continued Bethany, dancing in Jennie's resolute grasp. "Now I could almost love the naughty creature."

The Judge had reached her now, and she broke away from Jennie and clung to him. "I missed my drives most dreadfully. Jennie took me for a walk the day before yesterday, Jennie took me for a walk yesterday, Jennie took me for a walk to-day, and what do you think I found?"

"Come inside, child, come inside; you will take cold," said the Judge, and he motioned to Jennie to close the big front door.

"There they are—what I found," screamed Bethany. "O, I am a thankful little girl to Satan for tempting me that day, 'cause if he hadn't tempted me I'd not have walked with Jennie, and if I hadn't walked with Jennie I'd never have found my sweet colored boy and my precious, precious Bylow."

The Judge groaned inwardly. Sure enough, in the middle of the hall stood the grinning colored boy and the ugly yellow spotted dog.

The Judge preserved a calm exterior, though the colored boy called warningly, "Keep back, sah—you's got on a good coat, and he do hate fine cloes. I'll hang on to him," and with might and main he pulled back on the dirty brown strap about the dog's neck.

Dallas, not as wary as the Judge, went nearer, and was saluted by a snap from the dog's powerful jaws that made him jump in the air.

"O, Bylow, Bylow!" cried Bethany, in dismay, and to the Judge's great disapprobation she threw her arms round the snapping dog. "My precious dog, you must not be so bad."

The dog put out a long red tongue and lapped her forehead.

"Bethany," said the Judge, "come here."

"O, Daddy Grandpa!" she exclaimed, fairly throwing herself at him. "Bethany is 'most dead with joy, and I knew you'd be dead, too."

In face of so much enthusiasm and such perfect trust in his hearty coöperation, the Judge felt that it would be very hard to disappoint the child, but he was firm on the subject of vicious animals.



“In the middle of the hall stood the grinning colored boy
and the ugly yellow spotted dog.”

"Boy," he said to the grinning Brick, "what is the matter with that dog?"

"Your cloes, sah—turn your coat, sah, jes' for fun—you'll not see no teeth, sah. He'll jus' love you. Look-y-here—" and he pointed to a most disreputable-looking figure descending the staircase from the floor above.

The Judge somewhat helplessly took off his heavy coat and threw it over a chair. These children were turning his house upside down. That was a tramp coming downstairs—a tramp, pure and simple. But what was it—a snicker from young Jennie notified him that there was mystery afoot.

The supposed tramp was apparently youthful, but his rags were so clean and evidently so freshly made that the Judge became suspicious, and then that smooth, dark young chin and the red lips under the battered hat—surely they belonged to his grandson Titus. The old bathrobe, too, he thought he recognized as one of his own. What nonsense was this?

Bethany was laughing and clapping her hands, Dallas was giggling, and Brick was grinning more alarmingly than ever. "Come on, young sah—he'll jus' eat you up wid kindness—no feah in dat dress. Come on, come on—I'se loosin' him," and he let the dog go.

The creature with the hideous yellow spots actually ran toward Titus with his mouth open, but instead of devouring him he fawned on him, licked him, and soon was romping all over the hall with him.

"Titus," said his grandfather, "stop this noise and explain your actions to me."

Titus drew up in front of him, and, still holding the dog, who was playfully biting at his fingers, gave his old hat a blow that sent it spinning into a corner of the hall. Then he said breathlessly, "This is the queerest dog you ever saw, grandfather. He hates well dressed people. When he came he ripped down the seam of my trousers. Brick told me to go and dress up like a tramp, and see the difference. You know Brick has been a tramp's boy."

"A what?" inquired the Judge.

"A boy that goes about with a tramp—you've heard of them, grandfather. He waits on the tramp. Bylow went with him, and he hates well dressed people and nice houses."

"Then his place is plainly not here," observed the Judge, but under his breath, for fear of Bethany, who was now ecstatically smoothing the colored boy's coat and sleeve.

"So your name is Brick," he said, addressing the stranger.

"Yes, sah," and Brick showed every tooth in his head.

His color was indeed somewhat brickish. The Judge had never seen a colored boy of just this shade before, and he suspected keenly that he had not been washed for some time.

"You like this little girl?" he said, indicating Bethany.

"She nice little girl, sah," responded the boy, opening his mouth so alarmingly wide that the Judge saw not only his whole stock of teeth, but such an expanse of pink gums, tongue, and throat

that he gazed at them in mild fascination. His words were fairly swallowed up in this pink gulf.

"She nice little girl," Brick continued. "She good to dogs an' cats. I like dogs meself. Me an' Bylow's great friends," and he nodded toward the dog, which had calmed down and was lying at his feet panting and with half-shut eyes.

"Daddy Grandpa," said Bethany, in sudden anxiety, "where are they going to sleep? O, where are they going to sleep?"

The Judge put up a hand and vigorously stroked his mustache. He knew Bethany's generous heart prompted her to wish for them the best in the house.

"Well," he replied, kindly, "we're pretty well filled up inside, but there's a good room out in the stable opposite Roblee's."

"Daddy Grandpa," she said, timidly, "there's the big spare room—the blue velvet room with the gilt furniture."

"My friend Colonel Hansom is to occupy that next week," said the Judge. "It would be awkward to turn out the boy for him."

Brick was exploding with laughter. He was a good deal older than Bethany and appreciated the situation perfectly.

"I guess we's all right in the stable, missie," he said, with a snicker. "Bylow an' me's used to sleep-in' with hosses. Then we can guard you when the bogies come about. There's lots of bogies these days," and his eyes grew round, and he rolled them wildly to and fro.

"Did you see many out West?" asked the little girl, in an awestruck voice.

"The air was thick with 'em, missie. They jus' called me an' Bylow till we didn't know which way fer to go."

"Help! Help! Mum-mum-murder!" yelled a sudden voice.

"Blow that 'ere, Bylow!" muttered Brick, and he made a dart for the back stairway. "If he aint sneaked away!"

Titus and Dallas dashed after him, while little Bethany, twisting her tiny hands in dismay, brought up the rear with the Judge.

"It's Higby," she said, tearfully. "I told Titus to tell him to put on old clothes. I suppose Titus forgot. O, dear, dear!"

"Mum-mum-murder," went on the voice, "help; there's something caught m-m-me behind. M-m-missis Blodgett! Girls!"

"We're coming," called Titus, at the top of the stairway; "hold on."

"Ca-ca-catch the dishes, some one," wailed Higby. "O! law—law—law me! There they go!"

There was a terrible clatter of falling china, and then Higby's voice rose higher and shriller than ever.

"H-h-he's got m-m-me by the leg. O! O! O! he's a rippin' me! Help, I say, help!"

The boys dashed valiantly down the stairway. Brick caught the dog by the neck. Higby, true to his habit of backing when agonizing for words, promptly stepped out behind, and fell in a heap on Brick, Bylow, and the broken china. Titus and Dallas, nearly choking with laughter, wrestled with the man, dog, and colored boy to get them on their

feet, while Mrs. Blodgett and the maids rushed from the kitchen and stood with horror-stricken faces.

"Boys," said the Judge's voice from the top of the stairway, "boys!" and his voice brought calm to the situation.

"Yes, sir," gasped Titus, who was manfully placing Higby against the wall and holding him there.

"Take the colored boy to the stable," pursued the Judge, "and get him to lock up that dog."

"Yes, sir—yes, sir," replied Titus; then he added, in an undertone, "Hush up, Higby."

"I ca-ca-can't hush up," whined Higby. "Look at my pa-pa-pants. Torn an' hang-hang-hangin' like a woman's skirt. An' them gir-gir-girls a-laughin'!"

It was, alas! too true! Finding that Higby was not hurt, and that his assailant was only a mischievous, medium-sized dog with his tongue lolling good-naturedly from his mouth, and that the china broken was not the best in the house, the maids were laughing heartily.

"Get up to your room, then, and change your clothes," said Titus, giving Higby a friendly push, "and you, boy," and he beckoned to Brick, "come on out to the stable with me."

Bethany seized upon Higby as he came toward her and the Judge, and so bewailed his misfortune, and so sweetly comforted him, that the old man went on his way upstairs with a calmer face.

"Hurry up," said Titus to Brick. "I want to get you in your den before Roblee comes. He's something of a prig. Dallas, come on, too."

CHAPTER XVII

TITUS AS A PHILANTHROPIST

THE two boys rushed Brick and the dog out to the stable.

"This way," said Titus, and he ran upstairs and opened the door of a small room opposite Roblee's.

"It used to be a harness room," Titus explained, "but was fitted up once for a bedroom when that old goose Higby took measles and we had to isolate him. See, here is a bed, and table, and washstand. I'll get Mrs. Blodgett to bring out some bedding by and by."

Brick looked about him with his tongue and eyes both going. "'Tis a boss place, sah. Me an' By-low's not slep' in such a place, nevvah, no, nevvah."

"You see," went on Titus, hurriedly, "as Miss Bethany is so bent on keeping you round for a time, I'd like to get my grandfather to have Roblee take you for a stable boy. He's looking for one just now. He wqn't like your color, but we'll try to get some of that off you."

"You aint layin' out fer to wash me, be you, young sah?" said Brick, anxiously.

"Yes, you and the dog. You're both too dirty to live."

Brick made a bolt for the door, but Titus got there before him and locked it.

"No use to kick," he said, grimly. "You're a

likely-looking boy, and you're a fool to tramp it. I'm going to keep you here for a while and try to make you halfway decent."

Brick went down on his knees. "O, lordy massy, don't wash me, young sah."

Titus calmly took him by his collar. "Dallas, you'll help me."

The English boy looked down at his handsome suit of clothes; however, he assented quietly.

"All right," said Titus, with a nod of understanding and good-fellowship, "I thought you would. Go in the house and get some old clothes of mine from my closet—not too old, mind—and a comb and brush and some decent soap and towels—lots of 'em; and on your way here dash across the back way to Charlie Brown's and get him to bring over that bathtub he uses for his Newfoundland dog. O, before you go," he called, as Dallas was leaving the room, "turn on the heat."

Dallas went over to a radiator in the corner, then hurried away.

Titus continued to hold Brick, who did not cease for one single minute to beg and pray for release.

"You shan't go," said Titus, inexorably, "you dirty little beast. I've taken a fancy to you. You've got to stay here and be our stable boy, and you sha'nt be our stable boy till you're clean. I tell you, Roblee would chuck you out in the snow. He's cleaner than I am."

"I don't want to stay, sah," pleaded Brick, earnestly. "Water just pisons me. O, let me go back to River Street, me an' Bylow," and he gazed help-

lessly at the dog, who had gone to the radiator and was lying calmly beside it.

"It's for your good," said Titus, earnestly. "Don't you want to earn money and have a bank book?"

"Money, sah?" said Brick, eagerly.

"Yes, lots of it—nice clean, rustling greenbacks. But you've got to work for it, my son. Hello! there they are!"

Dallas and Charlie, with a great laughing and thumping, were dragging the bathtub upstairs.

When the door was opened Charlie stuck in his head. "Thought I'd come, too—sounded as if there was going to be some fun."

"No, you don't," said Titus to Brick, who on seeing the door open had tried to make a dash for liberty. Then he addressed the other boys. "Shut that door, quick. I don't want this frog to jump. Now, look sharp—Roblee will soon be home, and I want this over before he comes."

"Where is he?" inquired Dallas.

"Had to take the horses to the blacksmith. I say, fellows, put that tub here in the middle of the room. Now rush downstairs to the harness room and get a couple of pails. Then fill them at the hot water faucet and bring them up here."

Brick, with rolling eyes, watched the boys scuttling to and fro.

"Don't be such a fool," said Titus, gently shaking him. "Anyone would think we were going to hang you."

"Bylow," said Brick, faintly, "sic 'em, sic 'em, good dog."

Bylow turned his head. Titus was still in his tramp suit, Charlie Brown was considerably disheveled from working about his pigeon loft, and Dallas had taken the precaution, when he went into the house hastily to change his good suit of clothes for the one in which he had arrived at the Judge's. Therefore they were a trio of pretty disreputable-looking boys, and Bylow, after a lazy look at them, glanced at his young master as if to say, "What are you worrying about? You are among friends." Then he again lay down by the radiator and went to sleep. He knew that those laughing, chattering boys meant no harm to the shuddering Brick, and he took no thought for himself.

"Now," called Titus, "are you ready?"

"Ay, ay, sir," responded Charlie Brown.

"Then help me undress the criminal," said Titus.

In five minutes Brick was seated in a tub of deliciously warm water, and three pairs of kind young hands were lathering him with soap.

He gave one yell at first, then he sat still—and enjoyed it, if the truth must be told.

"Is this a baf, young sah?" he squeaked, fearfully.

"Yes, it's a 'baf,'" said Titus; "what did you think it was?"

"I thought a baf was cold, sah. This be warm. O, law!" and he joyfully paddled with his hands.

"Stop that," said Titus, peremptorily; "you're splashing us."

The boys worked like heroes, and in a terrible

haste lest Roblee should return. Brick was rubbed and scrubbed, and at last Titus shouted, "Out with him and in with the dog."

"Young sah," exclaimed Brick, "where's my cloes?"

Shivering with excitement, he stood by the radiator, trying to rub himself with the towels that Titus had thrown to him.

"Burnt up," said Titus. "Master Dallas there took every rag down and chucked them in the furnace."

Brick gave a howl. "An' me five dollah gold piece sewed in the tail of me coat!"

"Five dollar fiddlestick!" said Titus, energetically. "Did you ever see such a darky? He doesn't even know how to dry himself. Give him a rub down, Charlie, will you, while Dallas and I introduce the dog to the tub?"

Bylow was a considerably astonished dog. He was no water dog, and the touch of water to his body was as distasteful to him as it had been at first to Brick. Titus flung a question over his shoulder at Brick. "Is he a biter?"

"Sah," said Brick, earnestly, "he aint no bitah. I nevvah kpowed him to set his teeth in no one. He's just a rippah, sah."

"That's good," said Titus; "come on, boys. I'll hold and you scrub. Brick, get on that bed and cover yourself with those horse blankets. We'll attend to you presently."

It took all three boys to manage the dog. His howls, his bounds, his cries were prodigious, but he did not once attempt to bite. He was as shrewd as

most dogs, and he knew that the hand on his collar was that of a master.

He, unlike Brick, did not enjoy one minute of the bath. He did not care if the water was warm, and he struggled and kicked until the three boys were breathless.

"My! he's a bounder," exclaimed Charlie. "What a back! How many breeds are there in him, colored boy?"

"Don't know, sah, but I've heard them say as knows that his fathah ought to 'a' bin a bulldog, an' his grandmothah were a pointah."

"Let him out," ordered Dallas, "let him out; my back's 'most broken."

"So is mine," laughed Dallas, but he ran after the dog, which was shaking violently, and began to rub him dry.

"Now for the fancy dress ball," said Titus, and he began to pull at the heap of clothes that Dallas had brought out. "Stand up, Brick—here, put on that shirt."

Brick, grinning like a Chessy cat, took up the pink and white cotton shirt and ran his arms into it.

"Here," said Titus, and he threw him various other garments. "Not that way, owl—this way," and he began to dress the boy himself. Then he turned to Dallas. "I say, old fellow, run in the house to my room and get that long mirror standing behind the door. I was trying a high kick the other day and broke it. Grandfather says he'll get me another."

Dallas obligingly nodded, and his long legs speedily took him away from the stable.

"H'm, no tie and no collar," said Titus at last when Brick was fully dressed.

"Here," said Charlie, pulling off his, "don't spare the finishing touches."

Titus was just fastening the red-silk tie when Dallas entered the room bearing aloft the long glass.

"Set it down there," said Titus, pointing to the wall. "Now, colored boy, look."

The transformed boy stepped up to the glass. He gave one glance, then he turned to the three boys behind him, who were also reflected in the mirror.

"Where's Brick, gen'l'men?"

Titus shook his head solemnly. "Dead!"

The colored boy looked again. "I see foah young sahs in dere, gen'l'men."

His face was irresistible, and the three boys burst out laughing.

"That dead boy used to have cheeks like mud, gen'l'men," Brick went on, in his funny, flat voice. "This boy have pale cheeks. He mos' white."

"Brick," said Titus, solemnly, "we've taken off ten layers of dirt."

"Young sah," continued Brick, with dancing eye-balls, "the young cullid fellahs down at the hotel, they wears buttins."

His cunning glance searched Titus's face.

"Well, you shall have plenty of buttons to wear," replied Titus, agreeably. "We'll stud you with them till you don't know which is button and which is boy."

Brick gave a shrill whistle and leaped in the air.

Then he began to dance—to dance with such glee and so much comicality that the three boys were presently exploding with laughter.

“Come on; this isn’t work,” exclaimed Titus, suddenly. “I see Betty coming out with the first call to dinner. Let’s clear up this mess, ‘gen’l’men.’ Here, Brick, you help.”

The colored boy took hold with a will, and soon the room was as tidy as when they had entered it.

“Put some life into that dog,” commanded Titus, pointing to Bylow.

Brick ran at him, caught him round the middle of his body, and danced round the room with him till he had no breath left.

“Now cover him up with those blankets,” said Titus, “and come in and have some dinner.”

“Me, sah,” exclaimed Brick; “me, sah?”

“Yes, you—Charlie, will you stay?”

“O, yes,” replied his friend, sarcastically, “I look so pretty.”

“Get off with you, then,” said Titus, playfully giving him a push, “and come some other day. Much obliged for your help.”

Charlie ran whistling out the back door of the stable, and Dallas, Titus, and Brick walked toward the house.

“Mind you,” said Titus to Brick, “not one word to the girls or Mrs. Blodgett. Eat what is set before you and ask no questions.”

Titus began to yawn and stutter when they got to the house. His excitement was over.

“B-b-blodgieblossom,” he said, seeking her in the little sitting room off the storeroom, where she usu-

ally sat to be within easy reach of the kitchen, "I've got a new black pigeon—I want some dinner for it."

"All right, my boy," said the woman, affectionately, and she waddled out into the hall.

"H-h-here it is," said Titus, emphatically, and he laid his hand on Brick's shoulder.

"Bless my heart, and soul, and body," exclaimed Mrs. Blodgett, "if you aint the greatest lad! Another colored boy, and the first one hardly gone out of the house."

"H-h-how would you have liked to keep that first one, Blodgieblossom?" said Titus, mischievously.

"I wouldn't have given him houseroom," she said, energetically, "the dirty creature! Now this fellow looks clean," and she bestowed a kindly glance on Brick. "I'll have the girls lay him a little table in the wash room."

Brick was grinning, but not as alarmingly as before. He was embarrassed now, and somewhat afraid of this fat woman.

Ten minutes later he was an ecstatic colored boy. White girls were waiting on him, white girls were placing before him the most sumptuous dinner he ever ate, and he surreptitiously sneaked pieces off his plate and into his pockets for Bylow, the dog.

CHAPTER XVIII

AIRY'S SECOND CALL ON THE JUDGE

AIRY was arriving at 100 Grand Avenue, via the stable.

Like a little dark shadow, she flitted up the driveway to the open door of the harness room. Brick was there, seated on an overturned tub, polishing a silver-mounted bridle and whistling vigorously. Bylow lay at his feet, only lazily moving one ear in the direction of Airy.

He knew who was coming. In fact, with his dog-gish sense of smell he knew before he saw her.

"Good evening," said Airy, suddenly.

"Hello!" exclaimed Brick, starting to his feet. "Lord-a-massy, I thought it was a ghos'. How be you, Airy?"

"Very well, thank you," she said, mincing her words.

"Set down," said Brick, hospitably, pushing a stool toward her.

"Thank you," she said, leaning against the doorway, "I can't set—I mean, sit down—with a stable boy. I'm a-goin', a-going, I should say, to be a lady."

"Aint you give up that nonsense yet?" he said, agreeably, and dropping his bridle he got up and lounged toward her.

"I never shall give it up," she said, solemnly.

"There always was somethin' creepy about you, Airy," said Brick, uneasily. "I say charms when I'm round wid you."

"What kind of charms?" she asked, seriously.

"O, 'Debbil, debbil, nevvah die,' an' 'The bogie's got a lantern hangin' out for me dis night.'"

"Brick," said the little girl, severely, "if you say charms you'll never be a gentleman."

"Don't want to be a gen'l'man," he replied, stoutly. "Kin' Providence had a little coffee in de wattah when he made dis chile. I'se a-goin' to stay cullid."

"Well, I'm going to be a lady," said the little girl, severely, "and I'm not going to waste time talking to trash like you. I just promised mother to run and see how you be."

Brick grinned. He did not care for her thrusts. "Tell your mummy," he said, "that I'm a-comin' down to call. Kin you see my buttins? Do the light strike 'em dere?" and he moved anxiously nearer the hanging electric globe.

"Yes," said Airy, scornfully surveying the breast of his coat, which was one mass of brass buttons; "you look like the button drawer at Moses & Brown's turned upside down."

"I sewed 'em on myself," he went on, unheedingly. "Young Mass' Tite he guv me de buttins. I guess they ben't quite plumb, but I've got 'em."

"I guess you have to work here," she remarked.

Brick groaned.

"You won't like that," she went on, scornfully.

"Like it, honey—Brick hates it like pison—but, golly! de grub—dat's what keeps dis niggah heah."

"You'll get tired of it an' run away," she continued.

"Mebbe," he said, with a yawn, "but look-y-there, missie," and he drew a crackling greenback from his pocket and shook it in her face. "Mass' Tite, he call dat earnest money. Chile alive, Brick had one pound chocolate drops yesterday, two pounds caramel creams to-day, an' he's a-goin' to have a bag of jaw-breakers to-morrow, if he's a spared nig. Ice cream we gets at table."

"Ketch me givin' my servants ice cream when I have a house," she said, disdainfully.

"You're goin' to make a rattlin' fine lady," said Brick, with a comical glance. "Don't you come fo' me to work under yeh."

"I wouldn't have you," she said; then, catching sight of a new collar on Bylow, she asked, suddenly, "Who give him that?"

"Mass' Tite, missie. When he begged fo' to keep me, Roblee, de ole man coachman, he was mad, an' I guess de Jedge was half mad. But Mass' Tite, he begged. 'Well,' says de Jedge, 'de dog mus' go.' 'Grandfathah,' says Mass' Tite, 'I'm a-goin' fo' to make a gen'l'man of dat dere dog.' Says de Jedge, 'Ye can't do it.' Says Mass' Tite, 'Gimme a chance.' So he go downtown, he buy dat fine plated collah, he talk to de dog, he brush him, he show him folks wid good cloes on; he says, 'Don' go fo' to be no tramp dog no longer;' an', pon my honnah, dat dog, between de collah, an' de talkin', an' de showin', an' de brushin', and de good grub, an' de warm room—why, he's goin' fo' to be a respectable dog."

Airy said nothing, but she looked interested, and Brick went on with his vivacious play of hands, mouth, eyes, teeth, and tongue.

"An' dat ole coachman, he's a-comin' roun' to like him. Jes' wait till I tells yeh. Befo' he come, ole Roblee he miss his oats. Some one steal 'em. He don't know how. Says he, 'De oat bin aint nevvah open, only when I takes out oats fo' de hosses an' de cow, an' when I leaves it fo' de man who bring de oats to put 'em in. He's as honest as I be. Yisterday, says he to Bylow, 'Dog, look at dat oat bin. I'm a-goin' to leave it open. Go in dat dark corner an' watch. Ef you's any good as watchdog you'll ketch de thief.'"

Airy held out a finger to Bylow, who licked it slightly, and Brick continued:

"I give Bylow a sign, an' he went an' lay down—didn't run after me no moah. Late in de afternoon, when Roblee was a-drivin' de Jedge, an' I was in de house smellin' roun' to see if I could get some cookies what de girls was a-bakin', I heard a hulla-baloo in de stable. I runned, an' Bylow he was a-rippin' at de pants of de good man what brung de oats."

"That man that brung them?" replied Airy, in a puzzled voice.

"Yes, missie, de good man knew when Roblee was away, he brung 'em an' he took 'em. He roared an' he prayed, but Bylow went on a-rippin', an' I led him in dis harness room an' locked de door, an' me an' Bylow set outside, an' when de Jedge come he interviewed the crimminel. Says he, 'What you bin stealin' my oats fo'?' Says de man, 'I works

hard an' I'm only half paid, an' I've got a sick chile at home a-dyin' fer want of oranges an' grapes, an' I hev'n't got no money fo' to buy 'em. Judge, if you hev me 'rested, it'll kill her.' Says de Judge, 'You ought to 'a' thought of yer daughtah befoh. Come in de house wid me,' an' he took him in. In ten minutes I see de man a-comin' out of de house wid a bag of some knubby things undah one arm—they mought 'a' bin petetters, they mought 'a' bin oranges—an' undah de oddah he had one of Mis' Blodgett's lemon pies, 'cause I see de marangue from it stickin' to de paper, an' he had oddah groceries, an' he was cryin', and he hadn't no hand to get his hankersniff, so I followed on behin' wid Bylow, an' when we got out o' sight of de house, an' in sight of his cyart wid de waitin' hoss, I says, 'Boss, shall I give yer a lend of my hankersniff?' Says he, 'Quit yer foolin', ye sassy black imp,' an' he begun to gathah up his lines. Says he, 'Ye've got a good place heah. I advise you to stick to it,' an' then he druv away, an' I aint heard no talk of no policeman."

"Good-bye," said Airy, abruptly, "I'm a-goin' in to see the Judge," and she went slowly down the way she had come, and, going round to the front of the house, rang the bell.

The Judge was expecting her this evening, and Jennie, having been warned, made no protest.

Bethany had gone to bed. She remembered quite well the evening that Airy was to return, and she could hardly wait to finish her dinner before retiring to her room. The Judge smiled broadly at her haste. She did not like Airy.

He put down his book when the young Tingsby girl entered the room, then he took off his glasses and surveyed her in silence. He was shocked by her appearance. She was always thin and delicate, but to-night there were dark rings under her eyes, and her manner was subdued and languid. However, her indomitable spirit shone forth from her black eyes, and the Judge calmly returned her salutation, and asked her how she was getting on.

"All right," she said, coolly, "but I've been studyin' all night an' all day."

"That is a foolish proceeding," he remarked, warmly.

"There's such a heap to learn," she said, wearily. "Seems as if I can't ever ketch up to it."

"One thing at a time," said the Judge. "You are young yet, and, I hope, have many years before you. But you must not sit up at night."

"Be I improved?" she asked, unheedingly.

"Yes," he replied, promptly. "You have remembered your lesson. You came in quietly. Your voice is low, but you really look too ill to talk this evening. I will just tell you something I have been doing and then send you downstairs to have something to eat and get one of the maids to go home with you. I don't want you to come here any more in the evenings. Little girls should not be running the streets then. Come to see me in the afternoon, if you wish."

"Nothin' would hurt me," she said, peevishly.

The Judge got up and went to the mantelpiece. "Can you read writing?"

"Yes, sir, if it aint too scrawly."

“Well, here is a letter that I have written to your mother. I want you to read it, then to take it to her. Perhaps I would better read it to you,” and he sat down again.

Airy languidly dropped her head against the cushions of her chair and listened to him attentively enough at first, then eagerly, and at last with a strained, frantic interest.

CHAPTER XIX

DALLAS TAKES A HAND AT MANAGEMENT

"MRS. TINGSBY, DEAR MADAM," began the Judge, in his clear, rounded voice, "Some time ago I went to see a real estate agent in this city, and told him I wanted to invest a certain sum of money in house property. He has bought several houses for me; among them is one cottage situated on the Cloverdale electric railway line. It is only four miles from the post office, so one can easily get into the city from it. The cottage has eight rooms; it is heated by a furnace, there are hot and cold-water pipes, and it has a small stable where a cow could be kept. The outlook is sunny, and the situation is not lonely, for there are other houses about sixty feet away. There is also a good school a quarter of a mile from the cottage. I have as yet no tenant for this cottage, and if you can pay the rent, which is one dollar a month, or twelve dollars a year, I think you should, in justice to your children, at once take possession of it. I must not forget to say that I greatly desire to say that whoever takes the cottage should consent to receive as a boarder an old servant of mine—a washerwoman. She is in poor health, and requires some waiting on. Her board, therefore, will be liberal. I am prepared to offer

you for her twelve dollars a week. Let me hear from you at your earliest convenience.

“Yours very truly,
“TITUS SANCROFT.”

There was a dead silence after the Judge had finished reading the letter. He folded it, put it back in the envelope, then looked at Airy.

Her eyes were fixed, and she was staring strangely at him. At last her jaws moved feebly. It seemed as if she were trying them to see if she could utter a sentence.

“Be that true?” she gasped, in a hoarse voice.

“Yes, child, quite true.”

“Every word of it—house rent twelve dollars a year?”

“O, the pity of it,” and the Judge stifled a groan. At her age, to be so keenly, so terribly alive to the value of a dollar.

“House rent, twelve dollars,” he said.

“House rent, twelve dollars,” she repeated, mechanically, “and boarder’s pay twelve dollars, too. Only one is by the year, and one by the week,” and opening her mouth she began to laugh in a shrill, mechanical voice.

She started low, but she soon got high, and the Judge was beginning to stir uneasily in his chair, when, to his dismay, the laugh ended abruptly and a scream began. It was not an ordinary scream, it was an hysterical screech, and the alarmed man sprang from his seat.

Airy had thrown herself back in her chair, her mouth was wide open, her eyes were staring and

glassy. "O!" The man put his hands to his ears. It seemed to him that nothing in his life had ever struck such sudden dismay to his heart. He had seen women in hysterics, but this childish yelling was a thousand times worse. Where were the boys and the servants? He could not bear to touch the unfortunate young creature, and he turned helplessly to the door.

Titus and Dallas were rushing in from the room across the hall. When Titus saw Airy he fell back. He had something of his grandfather's repugnance to her.

Dallas, however, was not dismayed. He took in the situation at a glance, and saying to Titus, "You had better shut the windows," he calmly took off his coat and threw it over Airy's head.

At the close of the day the big furnace in the basement was apt to make the house very warm, and windows were freely left open. Titus ran about this second floor, hastily closing them, while the servants came running to the study to see what was the matter.

"Take her away," said the Judge, hastily; "let the women have her. I think she is half starved. Give her something to eat, and let her go home."

Airy's voice was muffled now, but it was still holding forth, and in addition she had begun to kick.

Dallas took up the lean little body in his strong young arms and bore it across the hall to the sitting room.

"Come in here," he said to the wave of maids on the staircase, and followed by Mrs. Blodgett this wave overflowed into the sitting room.

"I excited her—I will stay here," said the Judge, with an approving gesture, and he backed into his study and closed the door. "Take good care of her," he called once more, opening the door, "and send her home when she is better."

Titus returned into a corner of the sitting room, and Dallas became master of ceremonies.

"I've seen women like this in boarding houses," he observed, reassuringly, to Titus. Then he said, "Some cold water, Jennie, to sprinkle on her face."

The water was dashed on her, her hands were rubbed, and presently the exhausted girl sat up and shut her mouth.

"Will you be kind enough to have some hot soup, or something of the sort, prepared for her," said Dallas to Mrs. Blodgett, "and make the maids go away. There are too many people in the room."

Mrs. Blodgett drove everybody out except Titus. However, he soon slipped away, and she and Dallas were alone with the little girl.

They said nothing to her, and Airy, curled up on a sofa, panted and sobbed in a suppressed way, until Jennie appeared with the soup.

Then she protested. "Take it away. I aint got no feelin' for it."

"Drink it," said Dallas, quietly, and he held the bowl to her lips.

She had to take it, though in the effort a violent perspiration broke out all over her weak little body.

Dallas made her drink every drop of it, then he sat quietly staring at her. Mrs. Blodgett took the bowl and waddled away, promising to return in a short time.

Airy nervously plucked at the sofa cushions, until Dallas asked her a question.

"Why did you shock the Judge by screaming in that way?"

"'Cause he's such a wonder," she said, weakly, "he's such an understandin' merracle of a man."

"What has he done?"

"He's give us a farm—a greenery place outside the city."

"O!" said Dallas, quietly, "a place for your mother to take the children?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did you come here to-night for?" asked the boy.

"I come for to take a lesson in bein' a lady."

"Does the Judge teach you?"

"Yes, sir."

Dallas pondered a few minutes, then he said, half to himself, "I wonder if he enjoys it."

"No," he don't," said Airy, frankly. "He don't, but what kin I do. I've got to learn how to be a lady."

"I'll speak to the Judge," said Dallas, calmly. "I think I could give you lessons. It's a shame to bother a man of his age."

Airy's eyes sparkled faintly. This polite boy could teach her as well as the Judge could. However, she felt too exhausted to discuss the matter, and sat quietly on the sofa.

"I'll come to you," said Dallas; "you're not strong enough to come here."

"I likes it," she said, faintly; "I likes this house."

"Well, perhaps when you are stronger," he said, decidedly. "Just now, you look as if you ought not

to leave your own rooftree. I'll come and teach you several days a week after school is over. I suppose you'll be moving soon, if the Judge has given you a house?"

"You bet we will," she said, faintly.

"And now," he went on, "I am going to have a carriage sent for, and one of the maids will go home with you."

"I'm not worth it," said Airy, but she was delighted, he could tell by her wan smile.

Ten minutes later Dallas stood at the front door watching the disappearing lights of the cab that bore the poor child away.

Then he went upstairs to the Judge's study.

"Sir," he said, "if you will allow me, I should like to help that little girl get an education."

His patron looked at him benevolently. "But you have not the time, Dallas."

"Yes, sir, I could teach her any day after school."

The Judge reflected a few minutes. Perhaps it would be better for the little girl to have a younger instructor. Then it would be a chance for self-sacrifice on the part of Dallas.

"You sympathize with her aspirations?" he said, inquiringly.

"I've been there, sir," replied Dallas, warmly. "I have been poor and despised, and I have longed to get an education."

"Very well, I make my charge over to you. If you get tired, hand her back to me."

"I won't get tired," said the boy, firmly.

"She wants nourishing food," said the Judge, "more than anything else. I shall give orders to

have something sent to her every day from our table."

Dallas said good-night to him and went away, and the Judge thoughtfully picked up his book.

"I wonder what he will make of her—poor little soul, she looks as if she were going to die."

Until he went to bed Airy was in his thoughts. Poor little ailing creature, he hoped that she would gain strength. It was sad to have so much ambition bound up in such a fragile body. He was glad that he had done something to enable her mother to move away from narrow, dirty River Street.

During the night he dreamed of the Tingsbys, and when he awoke in the morning they were still before him. Therefore, when he went out into the hall and looked out the window, as he usually did before he went down to breakfast, he was hardly surprised to see the whole Tingsby family, except Airy, seated on the long flight of steps leading up to his front door. He stared at them, then he went slowly downstairs.

Higby was sitting on one of the hall chairs. He got up when he saw his employer, and slightly backing, as he always did when speaking to the Judge, said, "Th-th-there's a whole f-f-family campin' out on the s-s-steps, sir. They wouldn't c-c-come in."

The Judge patiently put on a hat and opened the door.

"'Tention," he heard in Mrs. Tingsby's voice as he stepped out.

"Good-morning," he said, politely.

She went on, without apparently noticing him: "Up, little Tingsbys!"

"Seems to be a kind of drill," murmured the Judge to himself. "Well, if it pleases them and doesn't last too long I won't complain. I wonder how many of my neighbors are up?" and he calmly scanned the windows of the house next door.

Two maids were behind the curtains. The Tingsbys evidently amused them.

Mrs. Tingsby had been holding the baby in her arms when the Judge arrived. Now he stood on his own young feet, and with admirable intelligence was taking his part in the maneuvers.

"Hands out, Tingsbys!" said the little woman.

Every Tingsby child stretched out its arms—Dobbie, Gibb, Goldie, Rodd, and Annie.

"Mitts off!" commanded the mother.

Every child bared his or her hands.

Mrs. Tingsby turned to the Judge. "See them finger nails, sir. Every one of 'em to be worked off for you."

The Judge shivered slightly.

"In case you needs it," she continued, with emphasis. "Now, children, your catechism. Question one: Who came down like a sheep to the fold and swooped little Bethany away to a lovely home?"

Five young voices gave an answer to the chilly morning wind sweeping by, "The Jedge."

"Who's been a good shepherd to Sister Airy?"

Again the shrill voices answered, "The Jedge!"

"Who's guv, or almost guv, us a lovely green house out in the country, which our eyes have all seen this blessed mornin'—guv to the Tingsbys?"

"The Jedge!" shouted the children, excitedly.

"An' now who's goin' to love the Jedge, an' work

for the Judge, an' praise the Judge, an' copy the Judge?"

"We be!" they yelled, excitedly.

"I am quite satisfied with this exhibition of gratitude," said the Judge, trying to speak very distinctly, "quite satisfied."

Mrs. Tingsby beamed on him. "Sir, your humble servant. If ever I hears anyone say a word agin you I'll tear out his hair, an' scratch out his eyes, an'—"

The Judge waved his hand at her. There was no use in speaking, for she did not understand a word he said. However, she would know what that prohibitory gesture meant. Ordinarily, she was a sensible woman. Just now she seemed to be in a strange state of exaltation, brought on, no doubt, by the prospect of being able to take her progeny to the country. In short, she was getting silly, and would better go home.

"Will you come in and have some breakfast?" asked the Judge, motioning hospitably toward the open door.

"Sir," she said, grandly, "I knows my duty. Never a Tingsby but Airy'll enter your front door, nor back door, nuther. But we'll process up an' have a look at the stable an' Brick, bein' as we're all together," and with a solemn curtesy of farewell she swept her brood off the front steps and round the corner of the house toward the stable.

"Higby," said the Judge, entering the hall, "go quickly to the stable with a basket of doughnuts and the supply of coffee for breakfast. Tell cook to make fresh for me."

CHAPTER XX

THE CAT MAN AND THE JUDGE'S FAMILY

LATE one afternoon Barry Mafferty, the cat man, left the island out in the river where he kept his handsome cats for sale, and quickly rowed himself toward the city.

The winter was passing away, the spring was coming. There was a feeling in the air. Barry could not describe it, as fluent as he was in the use of words.

The feeling was not a warm feeling, for the air was still chilly. Perhaps it was not a feeling, but a look—a look as of a departing, reluctant season. Barry did not know.

“Anyhow,” he murmured to himself, “the cold days are going, the warm ones are coming. Something tells me, something turns my thoughts to green grass and running water, to gardens and flowers—it is faith.”

He looked over his shoulder toward the city. “Just a good size,” he murmured, “not small enough to be stupid, and not large enough to be oppressive. Looks well this evening, too—enveloped in that red, smoky haze.”

In a short time he was abreast of the fish market. The old caretaker there always took charge of his boat when he came to the city.

Barry sprang on the slimy stone steps leading up to the wharf, tied his boat up, looked irritably over

his shoulder at the deaf old caretaker, who was shouting his name and a greeting to him, then went quickly up to the little cabin near the big fish market.

It was not quite dark yet; he would not go up to the city until it was.

The present caretaker and ex-fisherman followed him into the cabin.

"What's your hurry? You spun by me like a flying fish."

"I want to sit down; I'm tired," said Barry, flinging his cap on the table.

"Did ye row standin'?" roared the old man.

"No, I didn't," observed Barry, mildly.

"What's the news on the island?" inquired the old fisherman, sitting down before his guest.

"What kind of news would I be likely to have but cat news?" inquired Barry, sarcastically.

"Well, give us your cat news. I see the Mayor's steam launch goin' out to yer island yesterday. Was he wantin' cats fer his lady?"

"Yes, he did buy one," said Mafferty.

"Hey?"

"He bought one—or, rather, he sent his man for one—a white Angora with blue eyes."

"An' how much would ye get fer such a beast?"

"Twenty dollars."

"Twenty dollars!" echoed the caretaker, in disgust, "an' I drowns 'em by the bagful."

"You don't drown Angoras."

"Who said I did? I drowns common cats, gray cats, tabby cats, yellow cats, an' all kinds of cats."

"How much do you get for it?"

"Ten cents apiece."

"Do you drown them here?" asked Barry.

"Yes; do you s'pose I'd navigate 'em out to the Atlantic?"

"And the lobster pens are close by," observed Barry; "disgusting!"

The old man shrugged his shoulders.

"You'll soon have that source of income cut off," continued Barry.

"What'll be cut off?"

"Your cat money. Law! how deaf the old creature is! The city is goin to have a gas box."

"An' what kind of a union is there between the city, an' gas, an' cats?" inquired the old man, in quiet exasperation.

"Union and disunion. In future anyone having a cat to destroy can take it to the City Hall. They've given a big room to the S. P. C. You deliver your sick cat, or your old cat, or your superfluous cat, and a man puts her in a big box with a juicy piece of meat. The gas is turned on, pussy eats her meat, gets sleepy, lies down, and dies."

The old fisherman pounded the table with his fist. "An' who's at the bottom of that hugger-mugger business?"

"Mrs. Tom Everest."

"I might 'a' known it—I might 'a' guessed. Takin' the bread out of the mouth of an honest man."

"How about the demoralizing effect on children, of screaming cats dragged through the city in bags?"

"Screaming fish tails! It don't hurt 'em."

"How would you like to be the cat?" asked Barry, slyly.

"She's always interferin'," said the old man, passionately; "she's always stickin' her little nose into every man's business."

"Who runs to help me when I'm ill?" inquired Barry, mischievously.

The old man showed his teeth at him.

"Who always pays my doctor's bill?" pursued Barry, in his clear voice.

"I've jined a benevolent society," shouted the old man; "she aint a-goin' to coddle me any more."

"What about your grandchild?" said Barry. "What about that imp Cracker that no one else can manage?"

The old man's head sank, and he looked thoughtful.

"How many times has she saved him from the police court? Old Cracker, you are an ungrateful wretch. Come now, aint you?"

The poor old fellow's head sank lower. His young grandchild was all he had in the world. "I believe I be," he said, slowly. "I believe I be."

Barry looked out the window. "'Most dark; I can be going. Seen any strangers about, Cracker, senior?" he asked, as he turned his coat collar well up about his ears and pulled his cap down over his eyes.

"No, no—no strangers, only fish," replied the caretaker; only fish, fish, fish," and Barry left him mumbling to himself.

With a quick, alert step the dark-featured, middle-aged man left River Street, went up one of the slightly ascending side streets that led to Broadway, quickly crossed the brilliantly lighted and crowded

thoroughfare, and struck into a succession of quiet streets that finally led him to Grand Avenue.

Little by little the appearance of the houses had improved, until here on Grand Avenue he found himself among mansions.

Arrived near Judge Sancroft's house, he walked more slowly, then suddenly he turned, and retracing his steps walked up the driveway leading to the stable.

His keen eyes scrutinized every window of the house. Here and there one was open. "They all like fresh air," he murmured. Under one open window he paused. He could hear the sound of voices. Dallas was speaking—Dallas the clever English boy that the Judge had adopted—and he was scolding Bethany, dear little Bethany.

Barry's face softened. He was very much attached to that child. Ever since he had known her she had been sweet and gentle with him—first at Mrs. Tingsby's, and now when he occasionally saw her with the Judge. Dear little Bethany—the only little girl he knew in Riverport that he cared much about, except poor Airy, and his face softened still further. What was Dallas worrying her about?

They seemed to be standing by one of the open parlor windows. "Bethany," Dallas was saying, severely, "I have brought you in here to scold you. I think you are a selfish little girl."

"I don't feel selfish," remarked Bethany, whimperingly.

"Well, you act so. I consider you the most selfish person in this household. Everyone in the family has got into the way of pleasing you from morning

till night, and it is having a bad effect on you. I consider that you treated Airy very shabbily this afternoon."

"I didn't do anything," said Bethany, resentfully.

"That is just it—you didn't do anything. Now, you know as well as I do that for weeks I have been teaching Airy, and that she has improved immensely—just immensely. She called this afternoon, and naturally I was anxious to show her off to the Judge. I took pains to have her meet you when you came from school, and what did you do?"

"You didn't tell me what to do?" said Bethany, irritably.

"Didn't tell you? Of course not. I hoped that your own kind heart would tell you. You saw that Airy was dying to play with you. Why didn't you invite her to stay?"

Bethany burst out with an intense remark, "I don't like Airy."

"Neither do I, but is that an excuse? Suppose I stopped teaching her because I did not like her?"

"I'm going to tell Daddy Grandpa how you are scolding me," remarked Bethany, plaintively.

"I am delighted to hear it. His calm, judicial mind will decide between us. I just wanted him to know, but I wouldn't go to him, because I hate to carry tales. And now you may go, Miss Selfishness. My interview with you is over."

Barry, under the window, laughed to himself, then listened as he heard the Judge's kind voice: "Children, what are you sparring about here in this lonely room?"

"O, Daddy Grandpa," exclaimed Bethany—and

Barry could imagine her running to throw herself into the arms of her adopted grandfather, "am I a selfish creature?"

The Judge's clear tones floated out the window, "Certainly—we all are."

"But Dallas says I am just un—un—it begins with 'un' and ends with 'able.'"

"So we all are," said the Judge; "so we all are."

"But he says I've been very hateful to Airy, Daddy Grandpa."

"So have we all been," said the Judge, cheerily, "so have we all been. She is longing to come here. She meets me in the street, and she throws out hints. Dallas, invite your pupil to visit us any hour of any day, or to any meal. She does you credit."

Barry could hear the boy's deeply gratified "Thank you, sir," then the voices were hushed for him, for the Judge said, "Please close that window, my boy. Bethany's frock is thin."

With a smile Barry went on his way to the stable. The lights were out here, everything was quiet, but he saw a glimmer from Brick's room.

"Hello!" he called, and he threw a handful of gravel against the window. "Brick, ahoy!"

Brick ran up the blind, opened the window, and thrust out a cautious head.

"Dat you, Mistah Mafferty?"

"Yes, Brick; come down and let me in."

The colored boy ran nimbly down the stairs, pressed a button, and lighting up the lower part of the stable ushered his friend in.

"Come up to your room," said Barry, commandingly, and he strode ahead of the lad. Brick, grin-

ning from ear to ear at the honor conferred upon him—for this was the second time that Barry had visited him within a week—followed close at his heels.

When they got into his snug little bedroom Barry sat down and looked about him. Brick was in the act of changing his clothes.

“What are you dressing up for, this time of night?” inquired Barry, suspiciously. “You ought to be going to bed.”

“I aint dressin’ up; I’s e dressing down,” giggled Brick. “I’s e goin’ fo’ a walk, mistah, an’ I didn’ want fo’ to soil my buttins,” and he glanced lovingly at the bespangled garment of the bed.

“Where are you going?”

“Down to River Street. I’s e pinin’ to see my ole friens. Me an’ Bylow’s not been down fo’ about a thousan’ meal times,” and he gave a push with his foot toward the plump sleeping dog.

“He don’t want to go,” observed Barry, dryly.

“I guess you’re right, mistah. I guess Bylow be jus’ as much glorified to stay to hum, but, bless you, Brick don’ care,” and he thrust his arms into a shabby coat that he took from a hook on the wall.

“How many coats have you without buttons?” asked Barry, curiously.

“Dere’s dis fellow,” said Brick, laying his hand on his chest, “an’ dat fellow,” and he brought one from the closet, “an’ de odder fellow,” and he pointed to one that Bylow lay on.

“Let’s see them all lying on the bed together,” said Barry, in an infantile way.

Brick laughed in silly glee. It was delightful to

see this fine gentleman—for such the cat man was to him—taking such an interest in his wardrobe. He stripped off the coat he had on, brought another from the closet, pulled the one out from under the protesting Bylow, and laid them on the bed.

“And how many coats have you with buttons?” asked Barry.

“Only two, mistah; de fust best an’ de second best.”

Barry calmly rolled the three buttonless coats together and put them under his arm.

“Were you going to River Street to see anyone in particular?”

“No, mistah—jes’ thought I’d sauntah roun’. Mebbe call on Mis’ Tingsby; but, law me, dis nig-gah furgits. She aint dah. She’s moved to de lubley green country.”

“Brick,” said Barry, seriously, “you are happy here?”

Brick made a face.

“O, excuse me,” continued Barry, “I forgot. Of course you are not happy. You long for the old free life—for dirt and rags, and an empty stomach, for kicks instead of thanks.”

Brick hung his head. He had sense enough to know when he was being laughed at.

“Sure enough, mistah,” he said, “de meals dey didn’t come reglah in dose days. Dey played chase.”

“And the dirty, low people. How you must have enjoyed living with them. And the tramp, your master—what a sweet creature!”

“He used to wallop Brick awful,” and the boy

ruefully rubbed his shoulder. "I'se glad I runned away from him."

"Now, look here, Brick," said Barry, roughly, "I think you are a fool. You've got a snug berth here. Just as sure as you go monkeying round River Street you'll lose it. What did I tell you two days ago?"

"You tole me to stay in de house at night and let de dog loose in de yahd, and not to take up wid strangers."

"And you're doing all that, aren't you?" said Barry, sarcastically.

Brick stared earnestly at him for a few seconds, then he said, "Mistah, dere aint one thing Brick cries fo', but one."

"And what is that, you goose?"

"He can't do what he likes," said the boy, seriously. "Now, Brick, he always likes his own way. An' his own way aint Roblee way, nor Jedge way, nor Mastah Titus way, nor Mistah Mafferty way."

"You idiot! Who does get his own way in the world?"

"De tramp," said Brick, solemnly, "he do."

"Does he?" said Barry, "does he? Who is the tramp always afraid of?"

"He aint afraid of no one but hissef."

"He is. Think now. Search that crack-brained memory of yours."

"Do you mean the p'lice?" asked Brick, and from his slightly open mouth Barry caught a gleam of pink gums and white ivory.

"Of course I do. He's mortally afraid of him."

"Dat's true, dat's true," and Brick burst into a guffaw of laughter. "De p'liceman comes, de tramp runs, if he aint squared him, an' it takes lots of cash to square de whole p'lice of dis here country."

"Don't you leave this place," said Barry, warningly.

"Mistah," said the boy, and his grin vanished, "dere's two Bricks. One Brick he say, 'Boy, don' you get out o' smell o' dose fleshpots in de Jedge's kitchen.' De odder Brick he say, 'Run, boy, run—dere's fun in de city—run, boy, run.'"

"It's the button boy that says stay, isn't it?" inquired Barry, with a glance at Brick's official garments on the bed.

"Yes, sah; dose buttons is anchors. Brick can't run wid dem. Dey is ruspectability."

"Then you'll have to stay," said Barry, getting up and moving toward the door, "for I'm going to carry off your plain clothes."

Brick followed him anxiously. "Mistah, you don' lay out fo' to take away po' Brick's wardrobe?"

"Yes, I do lay out for to do that very thing, and if you say a word to anyone about it I'll give you such a walloping that you won't be able to stand up for a week."

"An' Brick can't go anywhere widout dem but-tins," said the boy, sadly looking at his glistening coat on the bed. "Ef he 'pears in River Street dey'll say, 'Heah comes de Jedge's boy.'"

"If you appear in River Street in that coat," said Barry, firmly, "I'll tell you what will happen. I'm going to see Git McGlory to-night. You know Git?"

"Know his fisties," said Brick, meekly. "De're like little potato barrels."

"Well, I'm going to tell Git that I'm interested in a certain colored boy called Brick that he knows well. I'm going to say, 'Git, if you see that boy on River Street just you shake your fists at him, and send him home. He's got a good home, and I don't mean he shall leave it.'"

Brick shuddered. "Mistah, aint I evah goin' to git my cloes back?"

"Yes, if you behave yourself; but mind, I'm watching you. If you cut one button off your coats, or if you go in one place where you'd be ashamed to have the Judge see you, I'll be on your track. Mind that now," and with a determined shake of his head he opened the door to go out.

"By the way," he said, sticking his head inside the room again, "have you seen anything more of that stranger who came here the other evening inquiring for the Brown's coachman?"

"No," said the boy, seriously, "I aint."

"Would you know him if you saw him in broad daylight?"

"No, sah."

"Well, don't you have anything to do with him," said Barry, somewhat unreasonably, and he went away.

Left alone, Brick stood quietly in the middle of the floor for a few minutes. Then he began to shudder, at first in pretense, then in reality. Then he said a number of charms. Not all the church-going and Sunday school teaching that he had had

could shake his faith in them. Finally he jumped into bed with all his clothes on, and repeating, "Snake hiss, and toad turn, water bless me ere I burn!" he called Bylow the dog to lie closer under the bed, then drawing the blanket over his head shiveringly tried to go to sleep.

CHAPTER XXI

MAFFERTY UNFOLDS A PLOT

MRS. TOM EVEREST was putting her baby to bed. Surely there never was such a provoking baby. He laughed, and played, and gurgled in his throat, he caught her hands in his own, he tried to bite his toes, he lapped at a little black bag she wore on her belt; in short, he was so naughty that at last she said seriously, "Baby, if you don't lie down mother will slap your hannies."

At this he shouted with laughter. He clapped his offending hands, he made a wild dash at her with his mouth, then suddenly there was silence. He was dead tired; all day he had been just as bad as he could be. He was braving the old Sleep Man, and now, in the twinkling of an eye, he had succumbed. One tired yawn, one last exquisite baby look of perfect trust in the young mother bending over him, and Tom junior was off for Sleepy Town.

Mrs. Tom laid the downy head on the pillow, she drew the coverlet over the pink limbs, she dropped a kiss, light as thistle down, on the moist cheek. How could she leave him, her one baby, her treasure, and she was fussing over him in the unique way that mothers have when there was a knock at the door.

"What is it, Daisy?" she whispered, turning her head.

"Mr. Mafferty, ma'am," said the little maid; "in the parlor. Wants to see you special."

"Tell him I will come at once," and only waiting to adjust a screen about baby's tiny bed, young Mrs. Everest tripped downstairs.

"How do you do, Barry?" she said, extending a hand with a frank girlish smile, as she entered the large, comfortable, but plainly furnished room.

"Good evening," he replied, gravely.

"You have something on your mind, Barry," she said, shrewdly. "Come, now, out with it to your mother confessor."

He gave her a glance that partook largely of the nature of adoration.

"Seems like the other day," he said, dreamily, "that I was sauntering into this town a lazy, good-for-nothing, despised tramp."

Mrs. Everest smiled. "I have almost forgotten that brown-faced man out by the iron works."

"I'll never forget how you looked that day," he said, earnestly, "such a clean, sweet slip of a girl."

"Four years ago, Barry," she said, shaking her head; "four years ago."

"And I had the impudence to ask you for money," he went on, "and worse, to threaten you, and you forgave me, and brought me in to town and gave me shelter and food. May the Lord bless you for it!"

"I have my reward now," she said, quietly. "You don't know what a pleasure it is to me to see you living happily out on the island with your wife. She is a good woman, Barry."

"Too good for me," he said, bitterly, "for I give her lots of trouble yet."

"But, Barry, you are doing better."

"I never was a criminal," he said, seriously. "Heaven forgive me for saying it, but I believe that the real, genuine criminal rarely reforms. I was and am a drunkard. It seems as if I can't get rid of the thirst."

"Pray to God, Barry, and work hard yourself."

"O, it's all very well for you," he said, with an impatient shake of his head. "You have a fresh heart and soul. Mine are old, and dull, and hard. Intellectually I see things as clearly as ever, but when it comes to feeling—"

"Barry," she interrupted, gently, "you are too hard on yourself."

He clenched one hand and brought it down softly on the other. Mrs. Everest, keep the children innocent and tender. That's my thought about them. Now I've come to speak to you to-night about what I fear is a plot against a little child. There's no one near to hear us, is there?" and he looked fearfully over his shoulder.

"No one, Barry. You may speak freely."

He threw himself back in his chair with a sigh of relief. "I've been under tension for the last two days. Queer, isn't it, what different kinds of people there are in the world. Seems as if the Lord makes some of us better than others. Now you live here in this vile street like a lily growing out of mud. You know the mud is here, but it doesn't contaminate you."

"Some one says that familiarity with vice is not necessarily pollution," murmured Mrs. Everest, gently. "The lily regrets her environment, but her

roots running out and fresh soil introduced may purify the mud."

"The street is better than it used to be, fifty per cent," he said, "but I must get on with my story. I hate to speak to you of the underworld, but it exists. Even the children know it. Some persons are bad and make their living off others. Now, as I said before, I never was a criminal. In fact, I was too low down for one, for I didn't want to work. But traveling about the country I used to hear about famous sharpers. I was as dust under their feet, but when I would get into a tramp's refuge of any kind I used to hear them talking of this one and that who had distinguished himself in the world of crime—you are listening, are you?" and he peered forward to look at Mrs. Everest's face.

"Yes, Barry, listening and interested, but the light from that hall gas is not enough. I will light the lamp on this table," and she took off its glass shade.

"Once, in Boston," continued Barry, when she sat down again opposite him, "I had one of the best-known all-round criminals in the country pointed out to me. They said he could do anything, and he was only a young fellow. I saw him again later in the year in a small New Hampshire town. He was running away from justice, and the chase was getting hot. I recognized him, accosted him, and helped him. He laid over a few days in a shanty in the woods I was occupying, and proud enough I was of the honor, though at the same time, low-down tramp as I was, I had a kind of contempt

for him. But it was an honor to boast of having been the host of Jim Smalley."

"Poor Barry!" murmured Mrs. Everest, sympathetically.

"Now from that day till two days ago I have never set eyes on him," pursued Barry. "But I've seen him on Grand Avenue. You know I took a liking to Judge Sancroft, and when I come to the city my feet always carry me up to take a turn round his house. Well, the other day I was getting near. I was plodding along by Saint Mark's Church, when suddenly I saw a man in front of me sauntering along, smoking a cigarette."

"Surely it wasn't Smalley?" said Mrs. Everest, excitedly.

"Wait a bit," replied Barry, with a gratified smile to think that he had aroused her interest. "I was gazing at him as one will gaze at a fellow stroller, when he quietly turned his head in the direction of the Judge's house. I felt something cold come over me. It was Smalley."

"Just imagine!" exclaimed his companion.

"Mrs. Everest," he said, earnestly, "I can't tell you how frightened I was and how glad. I felt as if a snake had uprisen in my path, and I was glad that I felt it was a snake. 'Brace up, Barry,' I said to myself, 'you're getting good. Once upon a time a meeting with the redoubtable Smalley would have afforded you amusement. Now your one thought is to get away from him.'"

"Good Barry!" said Mrs. Everest, approvingly.

"My dear young lady," continued Barry, "have you ever heard that a caged bird will dash itself

against the bars of its prison when it sees an hereditary enemy of its kind flying overhead?"

"No," she replied, curiously; "why does it do it?"

"Instinct, intuition. Now, I believe—indeed, criminologists tell us—that an innocent child or a good man or woman will often feel a strange, involuntary dislike for an evil person, even when there is no proof of evil apparent. Now, Smalley is rather an artless-looking young man. He has not a vicious face, and nothing that has happened for a long time pleased me as much as my shrinking from him."

Mrs. Everest smiled sympathetically, and as a sudden thought occurred to him he went on: "When I spoke of the intuitive dislike of the innocent for the guilty, just now, I was not thinking of myself, but of you, or Bethany, for example. Alas! I am only half reformed."

"But you are sufficiently reformed to hate Smalley and his evil ways."

"That I am," he said, earnestly. "I hope that he will be brought to confusion."

"And repentance."

"From my heart—if it is possible; but I fear, I fear!" and he shook his head sadly.

"I suppose your first thought was to run away from him."

"It was, but my second was to discover if he had any object in being in that neighborhood. He had—I knew my man well. He gave careless glances at the houses of the Judge's neighbors. His look at one hundred and ten was long, shrewd, and calculating. 'There's mischief afoot,' I said to myself; 'I wonder what it is.' I didn't want him to see

me, and yet if he had heard me coming I didn't want to stop. It was a raw, east-windy day, and as good luck would have it I had on the fur-lined coat the Judge sent me and the fur cap I found in the pocket of it. I put up a hand, turned up my collar, pulled down my cap, then I walked straight on. I thought of stopping and taking a memorandum book out of my pocket as if to consult it, but I didn't. It might have attracted Smalley's attention—they say he has an extra sense. Well, he walked on in front of me, but I saw him give another look at the Judge's house. Some people don't see anything in a look. Smalley's spoke volumes to me. He had some particular reason for singling out number one hundred and ten. Then, to confirm my suspicion, he gave a sidelong glance up the driveway to the stable. He was dying to go up there, but he didn't like to."

"How little he thought you were watching him!"

"Yes, he hadn't a suspicion of me. I had to pass him, he was going so slowly. I felt him look me all over."

"And did he recognize you?" she inquired, breathlessly.

"Not a bit of it. My flesh stopped crawling. I was a relieved man. You see, my appearance was so different from that of the dirty tramp he had met, and then he would never expect to find me wearing good clothes and walking on a swell avenue, and finally he would never expect to meet me at all—would never think of me."

"But, Barry," said Mrs. Everest, wonderingly, "suppose he had recognized you. What harm could he do?"

"No harm, but he could make it mighty uncomfortable for me. If he had found out I was trying to reform a word from him would have sent every New England tramp this way to quarter themselves on me, and if I refused to harbor them to make up ugly stories about me. Lies are the breath of life to trampdom."

"Well, what happened? This is very interesting!" she exclaimed, with her eyes shining. "Please hurry on, Barry."

"My! but you have a good heart," the man said, admiringly. "I am old enough to be your father, but I always feel as if you were my mother."

"Go on, go on," she reiterated, in girlish impatience; "don't stop to analyze your feelings. You can do that some other time. What else did Smalley do?"

"He didn't do anything more just then, and you will think that up to this time he had done very little to justify my suspicion of him. However, I returned to the Judge's after dark. Roblee had gone to bed, but Brick, like all niggers, likes to sit up late. Presently we heard a knocking below. I told Brick to open the window and put his head out. He said, 'Who's dere?' and you know whose voice replied."

"Smalley's," she returned, promptly.

"Yes, Smalley's. He asked, as smooth as silk, 'Is Thomas in?'"

"'What Thomas is dat?' asked Brick.

"'Thomas the coachman,' replied Smalley.

"I gave Brick a pull. 'Brick,' I said, 'that's a bad fellow. Set Bylow on him.'"

“‘Isn’t this Mr. Brown’s?’ Smalley was inquiring in guileless surprise.

“‘No, it aint Mistah Brown’s,’ replied Brick, ‘but dis here dog’ll take you to Mistah Brown,’ and he rattled downstairs with Bylow.

“Smalley ran, and Bylow ran. I knew the dog wouldn’t hurt him, but he did some ripping. When he and Brick came back I pulled a piece of cloth from between the dog’s jaws. I recognized it as a sample of Smalley’s smart trousers. He wouldn’t do any more reconnoitring round the Judge’s house after dark.”

Mrs. Everest looked puzzled. “I don’t quite understand, Barry.”

“Smalley wanted to see the back of the house and to find out what kind of a watch was kept in the stable, and if it would be easy to enter the Judge’s house at night. I think Bylow informed him on these questions. He came early in the evening, so as not to risk his reputation by prowling round it later. O, he is a clever scamp is Smalley. As soon as we got rid of him I hurried down to the public library. Now my fears were fulfilled. Smalley had designs upon something or some one at one hundred and ten. In the library I think I found the clew to Smalley’s presence here.”

“And what was it?”

He looked round, then got up, went to the door, and coming back again sat down and spoke in a lower voice: “You don’t know little Bethany’s origin?”

“No, except that her mother was a lady.”

“Well, I do. Mrs. Tingsby was very much ex-

cited at the time the Judge took her, and little by little I got the whole story from her. Bethany's father was a scamp, a semi-criminal, or possibly a whole one. He was of good stock, though. Her mother was a Hittaker."

"Of Hittaker's soap?"

"The same. There were two Hittaker brothers. One made money, the other didn't. Bethany's grandfather was the unfortunate one. However, his rich brother helped him during his lifetime. But he wouldn't help his children, who are now all dead. The rich Hittaker is about as mean a man that ever lived. He was only good to his own. Now, what do you think I found in the New York papers?"

"Something about the Hittakers, of course," replied Mrs. Everest.

"Just so. A week ago a terrible accident occurred to old Hittaker's daughter, her husband, and children. His son-in-law came from Canada, and he had taken his wife and children home on a visit. They went sleighing; the ice was rotten on a river or lake—I forget which—that they crossed, or, rather, I believe it was an airhole they got into. To tell the truth, I read the thing in such a hurry lest Smalley should come upon me that I don't remember the details. Anyhow, they were all drowned—Hittaker's daughter, her husband, and children."

"Dreadful!" murmured Mrs. Everest, with a contraction of her brows. "Who can understand sorrow like that?"

"The papers all agreed in one thing," continued Barry, grimly, "that the old man was floored. You see, he had staked all on his only child and her

children. Now they are taken from him, and he has nothing left."

He was silent for a few seconds, and Mrs. Everest said, seriously, "What has this to do with Bethany?"

"Why, don't you see, the child is his heir or heiress—sole heiress. The papers didn't say anything about her. They merely stated that Hittaker was without other relatives. Now, as I figure it out, Smalley or some of his gang read that account with as much interest as I did. Some of them would know about Smith—Bethany's father—having married Hittaker's niece. I believe that on the strength of the old man's meanness they are counting on the assurance that when he recovers from his knock-down blow he will be likely to seek Bethany out and leave his money to her rather than to charity.

"Well!" said Mrs. Everest, in astonishment. "Well, Barry Mafferty, you are a clever man."

"Smalley is going to kidnap the little young one," he went on, positively, "as sure as fate, and hold her for a ransom from the Judge and old Hittaker, so I've come to you to talk about it."

"Why didn't you go to the Judge?"

Barry wrinkled his forehead. "Upon my word, I don't know, unless it is that I don't believe I could bend him to my views as I think I can you and your husband, for I want you to consult him."

"What do you think the Judge would do?" she asked.

"He's a very straightforward man," said Barry, thoughtfully. "He wouldn't shilly-shally with fel-

lows like Smalley. He'd run him out of town. Now, I'd like to catch him. There was a famous child-kidnapping case some time ago in New York. I believe Smalley was in it from something I read at the time, and beside that I've heard of him as a kidnapper. If we caught him red-handed now, this capture might throw light on the former case. Anyhow, I'd like to see Smalley shut up. It would be for his good."

Mrs. Everest's face had got very red, and Barry, seeing it, smiled in gratification. "I knew you would be with me," he went on, "in trying to catch him. Anything about children appeals to you."

Mrs. Everest tried to speak, but could not. Her voice was shaking with anger and emotion. "The vile wretch!" she ejaculated at last. "I hope the Lord will put some charity in my heart for him, but now I am so angry, so angry! To steal a little one—a mere baby!"

"Well," said Barry, reassuringly, "we mustn't be too hard on him. We've got to watch. But, frankly, I must say that I never heard of Smalley doing any good thing, and he's mostly after big game. Probably if he's planning to take the child he won't do it himself. He'll arrange everything, then slip off and have confederates come. You see, his face will get known in the city, and he might be suspected. But I fancy the confederates will go back on him and confess if we capture them."

"Well, what do you propose to do?" asked Mrs. Everest.

"I propose selfishly to keep out of the way. Smalley might possibly recognize me if he saw me, and

if he recognized me the whole thing would be up. He'd know I would give him away."

"We could not warn Bethany."

"O, no, that would not be wise."

"We should keep the children from knowledge of the evil in the world as long as possible," continued Mrs. Everest. "At the same time, I don't think it does any harm to tell any child to be careful about talking to strangers or going with them."

"I wouldn't say a word to her," said Barry, emphatically.

"What would you do?"

"I'd speak to the English boy; he's had some experience of the world. Tell him to keep a lookout for strangers prowling about the house, but not to be too watchful. And I'd warn the little girl's school-teacher. I guess about the only time of day she's alone is when she goes to and comes from school. That's the time of all she's got to be watched."

"I know who'll do that without attracting attention," said Mrs. Everest, promptly.

"Who is it?"

"Cracker, the ex-newspaper boy. He is so bad, and has nothing to do, so I got him a bicycle. The avenue is his favorite riding place."

"Good," remarked Barry, in a low voice. "And he'll delight in watching some one worse than himself. Can you trust him, though?"

"Yes, I have means to bind him, and he really seems attached to me. I have him sleeping in this house now. He was so dreadful that no one would take him. His grandfather's life was worried out

of him. He is on very good behavior now, for he likes to be here."

"Well, try him, and now, to catch these fellows red-handed, we've got to be mighty careful, for they are as shy as wild ducks and as clever as foxes."

"Hello!" said a hearty voice, "whom have you got here, Berty? O, meow, meow, as baby says when he sees Barry. How do you do, Mafferty?" and Mrs. Everest's happy-looking young husband strode into the room.

"Bonny is in the hall," he said to his wife, "looking for the best place to show off his fine new spring hat—for spring is coming, Mafferty. Do the pussies tell you that?"

"You know my brother Boniface," said Mrs. Everest, under her breath, to her caller. "Let us tell him, too. He is very discreet."

Barry nodded, and presently the three young people and the middle-aged man were all seated in a corner of the parlor talking in low tones of the best plan to be adopted to safeguard the rights of the little child and to punish the guilty unfortunates who wished to invade them.

CHAPTER XXII

THE JUDGE GETS A SHOCK

PRINCESS SUKEY stood severely staring at the Judge.

He was in his favorite place—in his own study, with his own dear books, in his own capacious arm-chair, and with his door wide open for little Bethany's noon homecoming.

It was not yet time for her to come, and to-day she would be late, for she had warned "Daddy Grandpa" that she must stay for a few minutes after school to talk about a birthday party that one of her schoolmates was about to give.

In the meantime the Judge, sitting comfortably back in his chair, was occupied with his own thoughts, and uncommonly lively thoughts they were, judging by his face.

The pigeon stared still more severely. Being of a serious disposition, she never approved of laughter—and the Judge was laughing now.

He was thinking of Airy. Her pranks amused him immensely. The day before she had been invited to dine with him. The Judge could see her coming into the room, her mouth primly set, her sharp eyes going to and fro. She did nothing spontaneously. With slavish imitation she studied the other children. She ate as Bethany did, she made

use of Dallas's and Titus's phrases, and if she had not one of theirs at hand she kept silence.

"Upon my word, Sukey," said the Judge, mischievously, to the pigeon, "I believe Airy is going to make a lady of herself, after all. They say that a faithful imitation is a good original. I foresee, though, many lessons ahead for us. The little witch has made up her mind to spend a good part of her time in studying us. Well, we don't care—we don't care," and he laughed again.

"It seems to me," he said at last, taking off his glasses and wiping them with his handkerchief, "that I laugh far more over children than I used to. I believe that as a young man I took my family too seriously. Certain it is that I get more real amusement and enjoyment out of the children of my adoption than I did out of my own dear little ones. How I wish I had them round me now!" and he sighed.

The pigeon wrathfully shook herself. She wanted no more children about. There were too many now for her taste, and elevating her head she said, sharply, a great many times, "Rookety cahoo! rookety cahoo!"

The Judge looked at her. Her greenish-yellow eyes were fixed on him with a steady glare. They seemed to mesmerize him, and in two minutes the Judge's dear old white head was nodding.

He was having forty winks before luncheon, but during the forty winks he had time to dream. He was facing a crowded courtroom, there was trouble somewhere; he did not seem to know just what it was. A great noise and confusion uprose. He tried to speak, but could not, and in his distress he awoke.

When he went to sleep the room had been quiet, the house was quiet, the street was quiet. Now the noise in his dream seemed to have followed him into real life—or did he fancy it? and he put up a hand as if to stop the singing in his ears. He hoped he was not getting deaf.

There certainly was a noise, a great noise abroad, and it was not in his ears. He heard carriages in the street and banging of doors, loud voices in the hall below, and now there were persons rushing upstairs.

He was still slightly confused. He had a vision of the pigeon listening, her hooded head on one side, her body vibrating with anger, then a dozen or more persons hurried into the room and invaded his armchair.

The Judge sat helplessly back and looked at them. What was the matter?

Foremost among the newcomers was young Mrs. Everest, her face like a poppy, the plumes of her big hat nodding against his white head as she bent over him.

She was almost screaming, she was so excited. "You dear old man, I've always wanted to kiss you, and I'm going to do so now."

The Judge smiled feebly. Did she, too, want to be adopted? He made no resistance, but he certainly made no response as her affectionate arms were thrown round him and a kiss was sweetly placed on his forehead.

It was a congratulatory embrace, he felt that; but what had he done, what had happened?

"Allow me to shake hands and felicitate you,"

said a second joyful voice, and Berty's husband seized and wrung his hand.

The Judge struggled out of his chair. There was Berty's brother Boniface, there were several young Everests, there were Charlie Brown, Titus, Dallas, and some other boys that he did not know, and what were those two young fellows doing with notebooks? Reporters, of course. Oblivious of the chatter and confusion about them they were rapidly taking notes, their eyes going all round the room, even to the top of the bookcase, where stood an indignant, frightened pigeon looking down at this invasion of her home.

The Judge soon forgot the reporters. He was just about to ask what he had done that he should be written up for the press when his dismayed eyes fell on a little creature somewhat in the background.

Who was that? If he were in his sane mind he would say that it was Bethany dressed as a boy. Her hair was cut short, she had on a boy's suit of clothes, and, astonishing to tell, she, quite oblivious of the laughing and talking about her, was amusing herself by playing horse on a chair that she had overturned.

She was astride it. "Gee up, horsie," the Judge heard her say, and she whipped and beat the chair with her plump little palm.

The Judge gazed helplessly at Mrs. Everest and ejaculated, "Is she crazy?"

"Poor little dear," said the young woman, indignantly, "those wretches played on her lively imagination and tried to transform her into a boy."

"What wretches?" asked the Judge, feebly, but Mrs. Everest had too little command of herself to answer him. "There's the Mayor," she cried, "I hear his voice," and she ran out in the hall.

"More carriages!" one young Everest squealed, and they, too, dashed out.

"Tom Everest," said the Judge, solemnly, to Berty's husband, "what is this all about?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom, absently, and the Judge knew that he had not heard his question, for he continued a lively conversation that he was having with Boniface.

"I tell you, Bonny, that you shan't take all the credit from our police force. It's all very well for those New York men to crow. They weren't in it."

"They were, Tom," replied Bonny, indignantly.

The Judge stared. Boniface Gravely was a young elegant who prided himself on his good manners. What dispute had he come here in his study to settle? He never had seen him out of temper before. Now he was red and flushed, and looked as if he could strike his brother-in-law.

The Judge caught other phrases from other excited ones. "The police—cab—driving fast—running away—railway station—caught them in time." Something startling had evidently happened.

He put out one of his long arms and drew Titus toward him. "Grandson, what is all this about?"

"B-b-lest if I know," said Titus, bluntly. "I never saw such a mix-up in my life. The people are just pouring into the house, and they're all too excited to explain. I tried to get hold of Dallas, but he's sparring over there in a corner with the

dirtiest little ragamuffin I ever saw. He's called Cracker, and I guess Dallas saw him stealing something."

"You might keep your eyes open, Titus," groaned the Judge. "I never had such an irruption into my house as this before."

"W-w-whatever it is, Bethany's in it," said Titus. "I hear them talking about her."

"Can't you get hold of her, Titus, and take those clothes off?"

Titus looked sharply at him. His grandfather's voice was almost childish. These people were driving him distracted.

"Come out in the hall, grandfather," he said, taking him by the arm, "the air is cooler."

"Law me," he groaned, when they reached the hall window, "look at the carriages dashing down the avenue. The Brown-Gardners' and the Darley-Jameses', and the Rector's—"

"Titus," called a sudden voice, "there's a deputation from your school coming. They've just telephoned. Can you go down and receive them?"

"No, I can't," growled Titus, "I'm going to stay with grandfather. Go yourself."

Dallas raised himself on tiptoe and stared across some heads at them.

"Anything I can do for the Judge?" he asked, calling a halt in his excitement.

"No," responded Titus, "go on. I'll stay with him."

"A telephone message for Mr. Tom Everest," called a piercing voice. "His father wants him on business at the iron works."

The Judge straightened his tall form and looked in through the open door of his study. A strange young man sat at his telephone desk. He was receiving and giving messages, as if the house belonged to him.

"The Mayor to see the Judge, the Mayor, the Mayor," reiterated a number of voices, and a passage was made between the people, who by this time crowded the staircase and the upper hall.

Titus guided his grandfather to the big hall window and threw it wide open.

Mr. Jimson, the Mayor, was a medium-sized, bluff, hearty man, for whom the Judge had great respect. He was a man who made no pretensions to elegance, but the Judge admired him for his honesty. This was his second term as mayor. During the first one he had threatened to resign on account of corruption in civic affairs. He had been urged to remain in office by all the best citizens of the town, and owing to their efforts many reforms had been effected.

Just now he was beaming on the Judge.

"Congratulations!" he said, extending a hand and heartily shaking the Judge's. "I'm glad you caught those fellows."

"Thank you," said the Judge, simply. He possessed a certain kind of pride that would not allow him to seek information from the chief official of the city, even though he seemed the only one capable of giving it.

"Just look at the people swarming down the avenue," continued the Mayor. "I wish the people of Riverport held me in such estimation. This your

grandson? How do you do, young sir? I'm pleased to meet you," and he shook hands with Titus.

Titus was as proud as his grandfather, so he, too, did not seek enlightenment.

Suddenly Mrs. Everest stood at the Judge's side. He did not know how she got there.

"Worked my shoulders through the press," she said, gayly; "there's an art in it. You turn one blade, then the other, and they cut the crowd. Dear Judge, the house is packed—not another one can get in. They're lining up on the sidewalk and the middle of the street. Just see. You can't shake hands with all. You'll have to make a speech."

As if her thought had communicated itself to the crowd, or, rather, perhaps, that the people on the street had caught sight of the Judge's white head, there arose a sudden cry, "Speech! Speech!"

The Judge looked helplessly about him.

The jam on the staircase, in the hall, and in the study took up the cry, "Speech! Speech!"

The Judge, brought to bay, turned rebukingly to Mrs. Everest. "Speech! Speech! but what shall I speechify about?"

"Why, about this trouble—about your loss and—"

"Speak louder, I beg," exclaimed the Judge, putting his hand behind his ear and bending down to catch her words. "There is such a roaring that I can't hear."

She put up her lips, and in a clear, flutelike voice called out to him, "Exhort them to love their homes and families, to keep them pure, to protect their children. I think you'll do best on general lines. Don't make personal references."

The Judge set his face. "I see," he said, firmly, "that is some kind of a complimentary demonstration, but I am not the kind of man to talk about a thing I do not understand. Tell me in a few words what all this means."

Berty stared at him in amazement. "Has no one told you?" she vociferated.

He shook his head. "No one."

"Kidnapers tried to steal Bethany," she cried. "We rescued her. The people are glad."

The Judge understood. "Thank you," he said, gravely. Then he faced the crowd in the street.

It was not a cold day, and the really soft spring wind blew aside his white hair as he looked from the window at his assembled and assembling citizens, for others were yet arriving.

For just one instant he faltered. He was not a public speaker, and he had never addressed a crowd like this. He might have failed, or he might have made a lame and halting speech, if it had not been for the presence of a hand somewhat smaller than his own.

Titus was standing by him, his own dear grandson was watching him anxiously. The Judge thought of him and of the other children of his family. He would speak so that they might be proud of him, and his voice rang out on the clear noonday air: "My dear fellow citizens, I thank you for this grand sympathetic gathering. In trouble or in joy, the inhabitants of a city should stand together. Stand by each other, and stand by your families. We read in Holy Writ that God setteth the solitary in families; also that ye shall not afflict

any widow or fatherless child. Now, a fatherless child has been afflicted. Wicked men attempted to lay hands upon her, but they were defeated."

A burst of applause interrupted the Judge, and with his blood tingling in his veins he went on with the delivery of the best twenty-minute impromptu speech that had ever been given in Riverport, so the newspapers said next day.

The speech was not concluded with as much dignity as it had been begun. It certainly had a more affecting conclusion than beginning. The Judge was just about to close. He was about to thank his friends and acquaintances and well wishers for the honor they had done him, when out of the profound silence about him there arose a little cry—a child's cry.

Bethany, happy at first in her play at riding a horse, had soon become alarmed by the continued influx of strangers. Some kind-hearted persons had taken it upon themselves to comfort her, and for a time had succeeded.

The child, however, wanted Daddy Grandpa, and refused to be consoled for his absence. She did not care if he were making a speech, and her wailing cry grew louder and louder, until at last some one had the happy thought of passing her out to the Judge. She was lifted along from one set of strong arms to another, until at last her little feet were on the window sill beside the Judge, and her arms were about his neck.

The close-cropped head was laid across his mouth. He could not utter a word. The crowd understood the little affectionate, frightened, childish embrace,

and a tremendous cheering and clapping broke out.

The Judge fell back from the window, and the Mayor stepped forward.

"Three cheers for the Judge," he said, waving his hat in the air, "and then three cheers for the children of Riverport."

The cheers were given with a will, and then the crowd began to disperse.

Titus slipped up to Mrs. Everest. "Look here, Mrs. Berty, send all these folks out of the house. I can't, as I'm under my own roof. It's too much for grandfather."

"Very well," she said, nodding her black head. "I'll just let a few stay."

"Don't you let anyone stay," the boy said, obstinately, "but yourself. Grandfather will want you to explain this affair to him."

"Not my brother and the Mayor?" she said, wistfully.

"No brothers and no mayors," said the boy. "Excuse me for seeming rude, but grandfather looks pale. He wasn't well yesterday."

Mrs. Everest ran up to the Mayor and whispered to him.

He was a man of businesslike methods, and in ten minutes there wasn't a person in the house outside the family, except Mrs. Tom Everest, though a few groups still loitered on the sidewalk.

She went into the study with the Judge and Bethany, and Titus ran downstairs to tell Higby to let no one come upstairs without permission.

Titus could not find Higby at first. After a time

he discovered him behind the door in the pantry, crying in a low and dispirited way.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked.

Higby raised a tearful face.

"Mi-mi-missis Blodgett slapped me."

"And what did she slap you for? I'll bet you deserved it."

"I-I-I'm a bachelor," whimpered Higby, "a-a-an' she's a widder."

"Well, suppose you are, and suppose she is," said the boy, impatiently, "what of it? She wouldn't slap you for that?"

"When I-I-I saw the crowd I thought she m-m-might be scared, an' I put m-m-my arm round her."

"Scared! You goose, you'd scare quicker than she would."

"An' she sl-sl-slapped me," continued Higby, dolefully, "an' she said, 'You sas-sas-sassy ole dog. An' I-I-I aint a dog.'"

"More's the pity," said Titus, unfeelingly. "You'd have more sense if you were. Now, listen to me. Grandfather wants to keep quiet. If anyone comes to see him put him or her in the parlor and come for me. If you let anyone upstairs without orders from us I'll give you a slap compared with which Mrs. Blodgett's would be a caress. Do you understand?" and he took the old man by the shoulder and gently shook him.

Higby smiled through his tears. "B-b-bless you, Master Titus. You want to m-m-make ole Higby laugh."

"Do you understand?" asked the boy.

The old man nodded.

"Put your handkerchief in your pocket," commanded Titus.

Higby did so.

"Stand up, walk out into the hall, strut a little, if you can."

Higby, with a wan smile, tried to strut, and to such good effect that Titus, taken with a sudden fit of laughter and choking, was obliged to retire behind the pantry door. Presently he came out.

"Higby, repeat after me: 'A bachelor's life is a lively life.'"

"A-a-a ba-ba-bachelor's life is a l-l-lovely life."

"Lively, you goose."

"L-l-lively life."

"None of your widows for me."

"None of your w-w-widders for me."

"Now, don't you feel better?"

"Yes, sir," said Higby. "I'll put me a-a-arm round the stair post afore I-I-I'll put it round that widder again," and he marched valiantly up to the aforesaid post and struck it with such vehemence and comicality that Titus put down his head and ran precipitately upstairs.

Higby's admiration for Mrs. Blodgett was a standing joke in the family.

CHAPTER XXIII

MRS. EVEREST BEGINS TO EXPLAIN

TITUS found his grandfather sitting in his arm-chair, with Bethany on her little stool at his feet. Her head was pressed against him. Her eyes were red and troubled, and occasionally she caught her breath in a faint sob.

Mrs. Everest sat opposite them, and on seeing Titus she said, eagerly, "Come, boy, we are just waiting for you." Then she turned to the Judge. "Do I understand you to say that you have not the slightest inkling of all that occurred to-day?"

"It would perhaps not be right to say that I have not the slightest inkling," returned the Judge. "I see that something important has happened—some attempt on Bethany's life or liberty, I imagine. I am in possession of not one detail."

"Do you mean to say that no one told you about it?" said Mrs. Everest, incredulously. "Why did not some of those people explain to you? I depended on them. I was busy looking after the people myself, and I wanted to say a few words to the reporters. Some things we don't want to get in the press. Why, where was Dallas? He knew all about it."

"Here," exclaimed a sudden voice, and the English boy pushed open the door and came in. He was red and flushed, and looked tired.

"If I haven't had a dance after that firecracker!" he exclaimed. "What a beast of a boy! He was stealing right and left here, or trying to. I had to drag him with me wherever I went. First of all, he brought his wheel into the house by the back way and broke a stepladder and muddied a lot of clean clothes down in the lower hall. Thank fortune, he's gone now. I've just escorted him to the corner of the first street."

Mrs. Everest looked anxious. "I must hurry home and talk to him. But first to enlighten you, dear Judge. I shall begin at the first. Two weeks ago Barry Mafferty came to me in great anxiety. Now, this mustn't be talked about. You boys will be careful not to say anything about him. Dear little Bethany is going to sleep," and she threw a compassionate glance at the tired face against the Judge's knee.

"You don't wish Mafferty's name mentioned in connection with the affair," said the Judge, shrewdly.

"Not a murmur of it. You see, he used to be a miserable sort of a man, and now he is really reforming. Well, he said a man he knew to be a criminal was prowling about your house. He made up his mind—indeed, he had cause to do so—that the fellow had designs upon some one in your family. He decided that it was Bethany, for he found out that old Mr. Hittaker—"

She paused an instant for breath, as she was speaking very rapidly, and the Judge, with a faint gleam of amusement passing over his face, inquired, "Of Hittaker's soap?"

"The same. Poor old man, he had lost his daughter, her husband, and her children. He hadn't a relative in the world left but Bethany. Mafferty said that probably some nest of criminals had decided to steal Bethany, on the supposition that she would be made old Mr. Hittaker's heiress, or, even if she weren't, that you would be willing to pay a considerable sum to get her back."

The Judge shook his head. "I don't know how it is, but an impression has got out that I am worth a great deal more money than I really possess. I suppose it is because I stopped working when I thought I had enough, and because I spend what I have, instead of hoarding it."

"You could not be mean," said Mrs. Everest. "You are very generous and very sensible. Well, to continue. Barry was greatly excited, and didn't want to trouble you in the affair, so he enlisted my aid and my husband's. Then, too, he wanted to catch the would-be kidnapers, and he was afraid you would not wait for them as we have done. It was sorry work, in a way, but both my husband and Barry said that anyone bad enough to carry off a child should be caught and shut up."

"So you have been playing detective?" said the Judge, and his eyes sparkled with interest and a slight inclination to tease.

"Yes, dear Judge, amateur detectives. We did nothing to entice to crime. We merely waited. I knew, Barry knew, my husband knew, Roblee, your coachman, knew, Mrs. Hume knew. Cracker, the naughty Cracker, was merely told to watch certain people, and he has been scorching up and down this

avenue like a thing possessed. We did not call in the aid of the local police or the New York police till the last day or two. Two young newspaper men here have helped us wonderfully. One of them guarded Jennie."

"Jennie!" exclaimed the Judge.

"O, yes; I forgot to say that she had to be told, too. Those scamps found out that she slept in the room with Bethany and had charge of her, so they tried to become friendly with her in order to get information from her. One of them came here one day in the guise of a workman."

"Who came?"

"One of this gang of miscreants. He rang the bell, walked in, said he was a workman come to do the window shades in the attic. Jennie went up with him, and when he got in the attic she found there weren't any shades to mend; they were all in order. He laughed and said he had come to the wrong house; then he rather made friends with her and said he was a stranger in the city. He wished she would show him about a little. Would she take a walk with him the next afternoon?"

"She did not go, of course?" said the Judge.

"She did," said Mrs. Everest, reluctantly; "she mistook her instructions. We would not have had her go with him for the world; but you may be sure she did not go alone."

"Why did you not stop her, if you did not wish her to go?" inquired the Judge, slightly wrinkling his forehead.

"I did not know about it, dear Judge. You see, it was this way: One of those young reporters had

engaged a room in that quiet street around the corner from here, where Bethany goes to school. What is the name of it?"

Titus supplied the name. "It is Garden Street, Mrs. Everest."

"O, yes—Garden Street. Well, Mr. Busby took a room opposite Mrs. Hume's. Jennie consulted him, and he told her to go with the man. He would be near her. So Jennie went, and Cracker, scooting after her, reported her movements to Harry Busby. The pretended workman, who called himself Simpson, acted like a gentleman. He talked nicely to Jennie, took her for a walk down Broadway, and invited her to go into Duffy's for ice cream."

The Judge did not like this, and Mrs. Everest hastened on: "She did it for Bethany, dear Judge. She felt terribly embarrassed. You know what a nice, quiet girl Jennie is—not one to take up with strangers at all. However, when it came to the ice cream she thought she had gone far enough, and Harry Busby released her. She put up her hand and took off her veil. That was a sign that she was tired of the affair. Busby was watching her through the doorway. He came in, pretended to be an old friend, and that he was jealous to find her with a stranger, and in a quiet way made her come with him."

"And what came out of that escapade?" asked the Judge, with emphasis.

"Nothing, except that the stranger found that he could not gain any control over Jennie."

"Did he ask her any questions about Bethany?"

“Not one; he was evidently planning that for another meeting. But he never saw Jennie again. Foiled in that, the kidnapers turned their whole attention on gaining control of the child herself. By the way, we found out that there were just two at first—two young men. One, whose real name was Smalley, called himself Givins; the other, his confederate, who tried to deceive Jennie, called himself Simpson, as I said before. Barry didn’t know his real name.”

“Do you suppose Smalley was the right name of the first one?” asked the Judge, searchingly.

“O, no, but that is the name he mostly goes by, Barry says. Anyway, we had these two fellows well watched, and cleverly watched, for they did not suspect us. You see, there were so many of us, and they were only two. Well, two days ago they both disappeared, and at this point we took our city detectives and the New York detectives into our confidence. One of our own men went to New York with Givins and Simpson, reported to an agency there, and the two men have been watched. We hope to hear of their arrest any time now.”

“Well, this *is* a plot,” said the Judge, drawing a long breath.

Mrs. Everest nodded her pretty head at him. “You don’t quite approve, Judge. I see it in your eye. O, if you knew what a pleasure it has been to watch over your interests!”

The Judge looked gratified. “My dear child, I thank you,” he said, heartily; “but look there,” and he turned abruptly to Dallas and Titus.

The two boys’ faces were red; their heads and

bodies, too, for that matter, were bending forward. They were absolutely hanging on every word she uttered.

"Just see them," said the Judge, ironically, "their young eyes starting out of their heads. You know what my career has been. I may say that mine has been a profession that I have kept separate from my home interests. I early made up my mind that, as far as possible, it is best to keep the evil and the good apart. Not one word has my family ever heard me utter with regard to the process of litigating or carrying on suits in courts of law or equity or on the darker world of criminal actions and cases. I know that the human mind, and especially the youthful mind, is curious, morbidly curious, with respect to the proceedings by which a person accused of crime is brought to trial and judgment. I don't think that that curiosity ought to be gratified."

"Nor I," replied Mrs. Everest, "but surely this is an exceptional case."

"Possibly," returned the Judge, "possibly. Please continue your story."

She smiled sweetly at him, and went on: "After Simpson and Smalley, alias Givins, left here, two strange women arrived. But we didn't know it. Of all the travelers arriving here daily, we could not be supposed to know at first sight which ones were criminals. However, we did not relax our vigilance with regard to Bethany. No stranger could approach her, or any member of your family, without our knowledge. Sure enough, this morning the kidnaping attempt was to be made."

"Pardon me," interrupted the Judge, "but there

is a great noise in the hall below. It goes through my head. Titus, will you see about it?"

The Judge was the only one that had heard the noise. The others had been so absorbed in Mrs. Everest's recital, and she herself was still so much excited, that she was only aware of what was going on immediately about her.

Titus sprang up and, running out into the hall, looked over the stair railing.

Poor old Higby, in trouble once more, was executing a kind of war dance round a young man that Titus speedily recognized as Mrs. Everest's husband.

Titus clapped a hand over his mouth to prevent an explosion of laughter, and for a few instants wickedly did not interfere.

"Let me by, you old scamp," Tom Everest was saying, half in amusement, half in irritability. "Don't you know me? Why, I've been coming to this house ever since I was knee-high to a grass-hopper."

"C-c-can't help it," replied Higby, flourishing a broom that he held in his hand. "You aint a-a-a-goin' up."

"You old dog—get out of my way—isn't my wife up there?"

"S-s-stand back," vociferated Higby, "or I shall h-h-hit you with this broom."

"Why, Higby, you're crazy," said Tom, good-naturedly. "I tell you my wife is up there. Would you separate man and wife? I'm going up, anyway. Now, once more, and for the last time, will you announce me?"

Higby shook his head. Tom gave a grunt of

disapproval, and adroitly taking his broom from him put it over his shoulder and began to march upstairs with it.

Higby came scrambling, stuttering, and scolding after him, and Tom, mischievously allowing him to come quite near, would then take a short run.

"Hello, Tom," said Titus, familiarly.

"Hello," returned Tom, looking up. "Since when has this castle been in a state of siege? Here, retainer, take your flintlock," and he gayly gave Higby a playful dig with the broom as he handed it to him.

"Since the assault this morning," said Titus, with a laugh.

"I declare," said Tom, looking down at Higby with a whimsical face, "I was just about to lift up my voice and ask you to call off your dog. I believe the old fellow has gone crazy. Look at him prancing up and down with that broom over his shoulder."

"Higby," said Titus, staring down at him, "put down that broom."

"Y-y-yes, sir."

"And sit down and rest yourself," continued Titus, anxiously. "You look tired. I believe the events of the morning have upset him," he said under his breath to Tom. "I found him crying just now."

"He isn't crying now," said Tom, pointedly.

Higby, in a state of silly glee, was seated in one of the high-backed hall chairs, making a succession of most extraordinary and most uncouth noises.

"Man, what are you trying to do?" called Titus, severely.

"B-b-bow-wow! I'm practicin' a-barkin'," replied Higby, with a wild burst of laughter. "'Tis the second time this mornin' I've been called a d-d-dog. Missis Blodgett, she begun it. M-m-mister Everest here, he went on with it. Bow-wow-wow! Ole Higby's a d-d-dog. Ha! ha! ha!"

"He's off his head this time, Titus, sure pop," said Tom. "He acted like a fool when I arrived. Shut the door in my face, and when I went round the back way he heard me coming and met me with that broom."

"Higby," said Titus, quietly.

"Y-y-yes, sir."

"Come here."

The old man got up and came giggling upstairs.

"Go down to the kitchen," commanded Titus, "and tell Jennie that you are going to retire to your room for the rest of the day. Then march upstairs, take off your clothes, and get into bed. Do you hear me?"

"W-w-we're a-goin' to have some d-d-delicious jelly for luncheon," said Higby, anxiously.

"You shall have some. I'll see that a big tray of everything going is sent to your room. Now hurry."

"B-b-bow-wow," murmured Higby, under his breath.

"And Higby," said Tom, kindly, "I was only in fun when I called you a dog. You're not one really, you know."

"Be I a c-c-cat," inquired Higby, mildly.

Tom's evil genius prompted him to yield to his impulse to make fun.

"Yes," he said, wildly, "meow, meow, poor pussy. Scat! Scat!"

He pretended to spit and hiss, and Higby scuttled precipitately downstairs.

Tom watched him going, then he said, soberly, "How much would you sell that fellow for, Titus?"

"Grandfather likes him," said the boy, briefly, and he was nasty to you because he had been told to let no one in."

"Does your grandfather let your servants eat just what you do?" inquired Tom, curiously.

"The very same. You ought to see his bills in strawberry season."

"Berty does the same; everyone in the house shares alike," continued Tom, "but my people don't. They would think they couldn't afford it. Hello, here we are," and he entered the Judge's study.

"How do you again, sir," said Tom, shaking hands. "I've come for my wife, but I thought I'd never get here."

"Tom, dear, do sit down," said Berty, eagerly, "and listen, or perhaps you can help me with my story. I was just at the most exciting part."

Tom and Titus seated themselves side by side on the sofa, and Mrs. Everest continued.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE EXPLANATION CONTINUED

“As I was saying when Titus left the room, this morning was the time fixed by the kidnapers for their grand stroke. You, in all ignorance of it, and we, too, for that matter, though we were all on the alert, watched little Bethany go to school. She was quietly and happily doing her tasks with the other children when at ten o'clock there was an arrival at her teacher's front door.”

“I think you said that you took Mrs. Hume into your confidence,” remarked the Judge.

“Yes, sir, we did; therefore when her maid said that there was a carriage at the door and that a young woman wished to see her, Mrs. Hume went quickly to her little parlor. She said a respectably dressed young person stood there and said that you had sent her—”

“That I?” inquired the Judge.

“Yes, that you, Judge Sancroft, had requested her to call and get Bethany; that Mrs. Tingsby had been taken suddenly ill, and you had gone to her; that the doctor was afraid the poor woman would die, and she wished to see Bethany. The whole thing was quite natural. Under ordinary circumstances Mrs. Hume's suspicions would not have been aroused. However, knowing what we had told her,

she was on her guard. And then, of course, she did not know that the woman's story was false. She asked whether it wasn't quite a drive out there, and the young woman said yes, about five miles. She said she was a neighbor of Mrs. Tingsby's, and would take good care of the little girl. Mrs. Hume said she would get Bethany ready, and she went away, leaving the young woman in the parlor. Now, we had had a telephone put into Mrs. Hume's house in the attic, and hurrying up there she telephoned to you."

"I remember," said the Judge. "She telephoned this morning."

"She asked whether you were at home."

"She did."

"And whether the Tingsbys were all well."

"And I told her that they were, at last accounts, and she abruptly informed me that she would see me later in the day, and broke off."

"She had to telephone elsewhere," said Mrs. Everest, with a smile, "and her time was limited. She communicated with Harry Busby, the newspaper reporter across the street, who also had a telephone in his apartment. 'Are you watching for that blessed child, Mr. Busby?' she asked. 'I am watching,' he returned, and then she kissed Bethany and led her downstairs."

The Judge shook his head.

"Now, don't you shake your head," said Mrs. Everest, playfully, "until I finish. Good is coming out of all this. Mrs. Hume took Bethany in the parlor, she introduced her to the young woman, and Bethany trustfully put out her little hand. She was

quite ready to go with a stranger, if Daddy Grandpa wished it."

The Judge stretched out a finger and softly touched the sleepy head against his knee.

"Mrs. Hume accompanied them to the front door. 'Take good care of the child,' she said, anxiously, and she peered into the interior of the closed cab. 'Who have you got with you?' 'My sister,' replied the young woman. She came with me.'"

"You see, there were four accomplices, sir," said Tom Everest, when his wife paused a minute and dabbed the perspiration from her face with a handkerchief.

"Four? Yes, I understand," replied the Judge. "Mrs. Everest, we are tiring you."

"Not at all; I want to tell you. I really enjoy giving you the details. Well, Mrs. Hume was in an agony when she saw the child drive away, for of course she knew that she had delivered her into the hands of two scapegrace young women. However, she raised her eyes across the street. There was Harry Busby throwing open his window and tossing aside the curtains. She knew that he had the number of the cab, and a description of it, and that he had telephoned to police headquarters. The cab would hardly be round the corner before a detective would be after it. Then there was Cracker scorching up and down beside it, his bad little head thrown over his handle bars, his gimlet eyes looking everywhere but at the driver, and yet observing his every movement. He remembered his orders. He was artlessly to follow any vehicle that left Mrs. Hume's.

Bethany was safe, but poor Mrs. Hume was in torture. She came on with a raging headache, had to send her scholars home, and go to bed."

"I should think she needed to," remarked the Judge.

"Ere this she has heard of our happy issue out of our difficulties," continued Mrs. Everest. "Well, our cab went on its way."

"Tell the Judge what order the young woman gave the driver," interposed Tom.

"O, yes, I forgot that. Before they left Mrs. Hume's the young woman said to the cabman, 'Go to Jones's drug store on Broadway.' Then she explained to Mrs. Hume that they had to call there for medicine. They were really going to the railway station, but she didn't want either Mrs. Hume or the cabman to know it. Upon arriving at Jones's the two young women and a little boy stepped out of the cab, dismissed the driver, and went in the store."

"They had metamorphosed Bethany, I suppose," said the Judge, quietly.

"Yes, sir. As soon as they got her away from Mrs. Hume these two women overwhelmed her with caresses and gave her a box of candy, which they said you had sent her. They also informed her that you were going to New York, and that she was to go, too; that you would meet her there. Her grandfather, her mother's father, had heard of her, and wanted to see her. He was going to give her a lovely house, full of dolls, and birds, and all kinds of toys. Now, you see all this harmonized with what the child had learned from her mother and

Mrs. Tingsby. To any ordinary child it might have seemed remarkable, but Bethany had been brought up on expectations."

"Don't forget the boy part," suggested her husband.

"No, I was just coming to it. These two young women told Bethany that in order to please her grandfather, who had always wished for a little boy, you had requested her to put on boy's clothes. They had this little suit all ready," and Mrs. Everest touched the boyish little garments of the sleeping child, "and they hurried her into it, and whipping out a pair of scissors cut off her hair before the bewildered child had time to protest. She was confused and submissive, and I fancy they kept stuffing her mouth with candy, and quoted you to her. At the drug store they bought five cents' worth of cough drops, then they went into the street and walked a block to the railway station. They did not hurry, neither did they dawdle. They did not want Bethany to speak to anyone."

"Were you watching them then?" inquired the Judge.

"No, sir, but I was requested to go to the station. I was to have the proud honor of rescuing Bethany. Look here," and she unbuttoned her jacket and showed a little white apron rolled up round her waist. I was in the kitchen making cakes. When the chief of police telephoned I had just twenty minutes to get to the station. I caught my hat and jacket and ran. See, I have no gloves," and she spread out her bare hands.

Her expression was so good, so genuine, so

lovely, that the Judge seized one of her hands and pressed it warmly. "Go on, my dear girl," he said, affectionately.

"I just rushed to the station," she said. "The chief of police was there, the chief detective was there. One was standing by the ticket office, the other was loitering about the platform at which the train for Boston and New York was to arrive in three minutes. I passed by the ticket office. The chief gave a nod in the direction of the platform. I hurried on, and my eyes went roving to and fro. I saw the two women and the little boy. I saw a great many other people, men, women, and children. All had the air of going on a journey, and, just to show how one's eye needs to be trained for such work, I did not recognize Bethany, the two women stood so adroitly talking to each, and rather hiding her face by their bags and cloaks."

"Not purposely hiding?" commented the Judge.

"O, no, that would have aroused my suspicion at once. They stood so naturally that actually the detective had to come over and stand beside them, almost to point to them, before I took in the situation. Then I boldly walked up to them. 'Bethany,' I said in a low voice.

"You should have seen the sharp look these women gave me. For just one instant they were off their guard. Up to that minute I don't think they had an idea that they were being followed. Then they recovered themselves and looked down quite composedly at Bethany."

"And what did she do?" burst excitedly from Titus.

They all turned to him, and Mrs. Everest went on with a smile: "The little creature said, 'O, Mrs. Everest!' as if she were glad to see some one she knew. However, she has not met me so very many times, so she was just a little shy. But she put out a hand to me, and looked queerly at the women, as if she didn't just like going with them."

"Why are you dressed like a little boy?" I asked, "and what are you doing here?"

"Is this your little child, madam?" said one of the women, respectfully.

"No," I replied, "but I know her. Where did you get her?"

"The woman who takes care of the waiting room told us that she had been left here. Her mother missed her when the last train passed through for Boston. She asked us to take charge of her, and we consented."

"Why is she dressed like a boy?" I asked, severely.

"The young woman shrugged her shoulders. 'She is just as we found her.'"

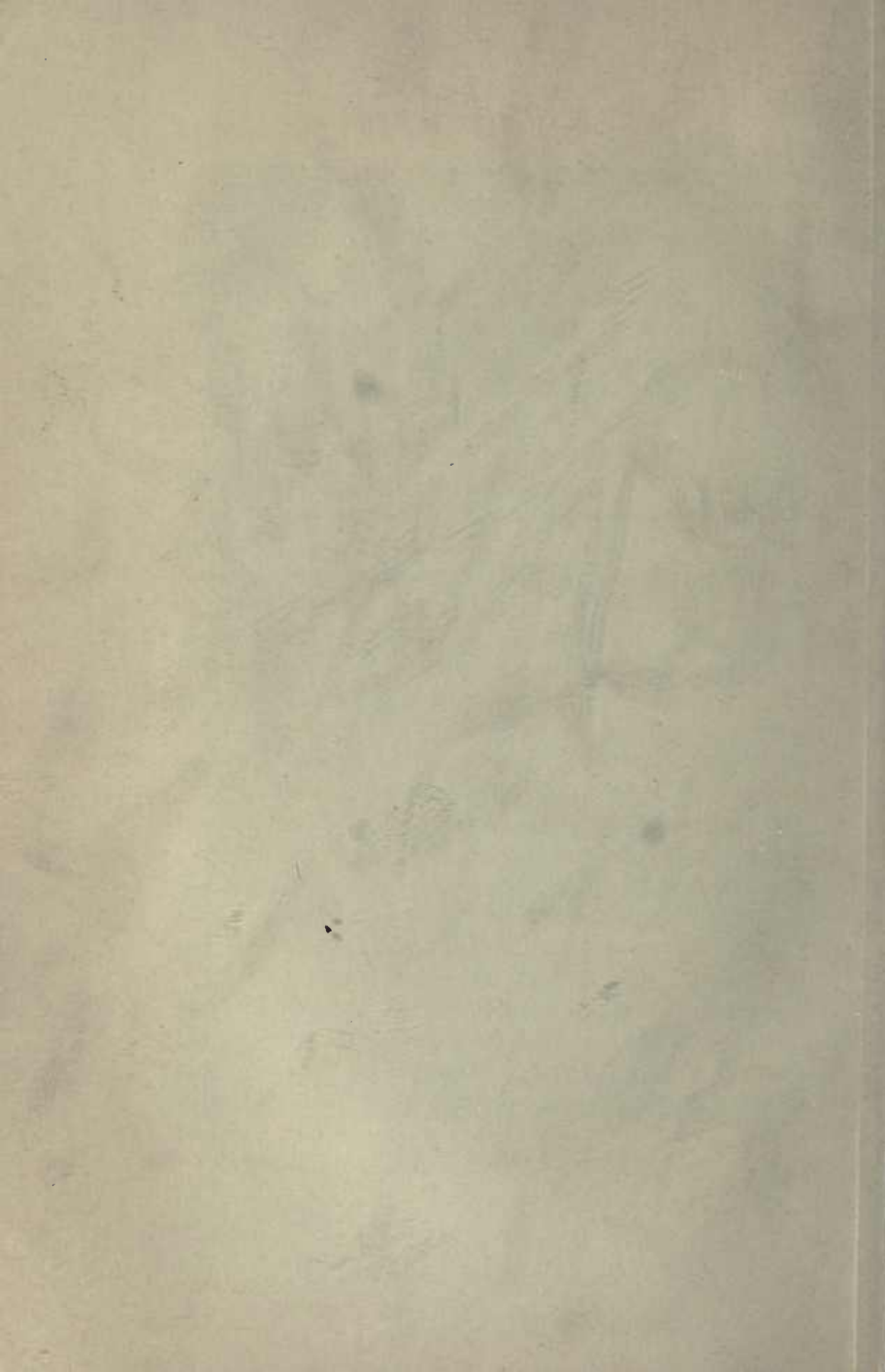
"Bethany, who had been following our conversation with much interest, at this piped up, and pointing to a suit case that one of them carried said, 'Bethany's clothes are in there.'"

"A very ugly look came over the young woman's face. She knew that she was trapped. I saw her glance at the other. Out of the mouth of a little child they had been condemned. O, Judge, I looked for some sign of softening, some regret, some tender feeling. There was nothing.

"We heard a dull roar in the distance. The



"Why are you dressed like a little boy?" I asked.



train was coming in. The women looked at each other again. They were uncertain just what to do. I think they had concluded that I was a chance passer-by and had made up their minds to rush for the train in the confusion. I had seized Bethany tightly by the hand. They knew they could not take her with them.

“‘Don’t move,’ I said, in a low voice, ‘there are two police officers in plain clothes behind you.’ Now, you know, Judge, we were all scattered, we watchers, even though Bethany had been stolen. Harry Busby was still on duty, Cracker was watching, the second newspaper reporter was keeping his eyes open, and Jennie and Dallas were by no means asleep, though, of course, they were busy with their respective duties—Jennie here in the house and Dallas at school. But we weren’t sure of the plan of the miscreants, Barry warned us. He said, ‘Don’t let them fool you by dragging a red herring across your track.’ We did not know the extent of their designs. Bethany’s capture might have been only the preliminary to something else. However, as it turns out, it was the beginning and end, and quite enough it is, I think.”

“What about the women?” asked the Judge.

“O, the train thundered in and thundered out. We wanted to see if they would have any confederates on board. No one got off to meet them, and then we turned. Such a quiet little group—the two women, Bethany, two policemen, and I. We walked down the platform together. The women were clever enough not to make a fuss. When we got to the place where the carriages stand there was

Mr. McIntyre, the detective, holding open a carriage door. The two women got in, and he followed them. I could not leave them that way. I rushed impulsively up to the door. I said, 'O, tell me you are sorry for this.' It seemed to me that even then I could have forgiven them for their crime if there had been the least sign of contrition."

"Did they say anything to you, Berty?" asked her husband, eagerly.

"One of them sneered, the other made a dreadful remark in which she invoked vengeance on me for interfering with their scheme. It was no time to reason with them. They were too sore over their defeat, but I shall take pains to see them to-morrow."

"If the affair was managed so quietly, how is it that it got over the city so quickly?" inquired the Judge.

Berty laughed gleefully. "O, those newspaper men! They had done such yeoman's service that we were obliged to let them have their own way at the last. You see, both men who helped us were on the staff of the News. It was too good a chance to triumph over their rivals. So they had everything ready. Bulletin boards were out, and extras were being prepared, almost before the women got to the prison or I reached my home with Bethany. I took her there to change her clothes, but found when we got to the door that I had forgotten to get the suit case from the wicked women, so we wheeled about and came here. By that time the news had gone by word of mouth just like wildfire. I don't know when I have seen the city so excited, unless it was when we had our last presidential election. I

am proud of the way my fellow citizens are standing by the rights of children."

She stopped, fanned herself with a newspaper, and they all gazed silently at her.

They were waiting for the Judge to speak. "My dear young lady," he said, in a moved voice, "you are reaping what you have sowed. Nearly five years ago you began your cry for the children. Day after day you have unweariedly gone on with your good work. This demonstration to-day was more for you than for me."

"Dear Judge," she said, extending a hand and speaking with exquisite gentleness, "can we not say that youth and advancing age are united in this? Together they stand, divided they fall."

She rose as she spoke, but the Judge made a gesture to detain her. "It only remains for me to thank you most heartily for what you have done for me. We will go over the thing more in detail at some future day. I must be very largely in your debt, pecuniarily. As for the moral aspect of the case, my mind seems to falter and stagger when I think of it. There seems to be an awful cloud overshadowing me—a cloud of possibilities—of probabilities. Suppose you had not rescued Bethany, what would have been her fate?"

The Judge's voice broke. He was overcome by emotion. "I want to see the cat man," he said at last, weakly. "He is at the root of this deliverance."

There was nothing amusing about his remark, but they all broke out laughing. There had been a great strain on their nerves during the past few hours.

Titus and Dallas roared until they woke up Bethany, who sleepily rubbed her eyes and looked about her. Mrs. Everest laughed so heartily that at last she began to cry.

"Come," said her husband, inexorably, and he checked his own amusement. "Come now, old girl. You can't be domestic, motherly, and grandmotherly to a whole city without your nerves going on strike occasionally. You come home and play with your baby and Cracker. He's cutting up Jack."

Berty weakly wiped her eyes. When there was work to be done she regained her self-control.

"What is he doing?" she asked.

"Teasing the life out of Daisy and the cook. They locked him in his room and telephoned to me at the iron works."

"Good-bye, dear Judge," said Berty, hastily. "I'll see you soon again," and she fairly ran from the room.

"Tom," she said to her husband on their way home, "human nature is a queer thing, isn't it?"

"Mighty queer, Berty."

"Do you know, when I first began my story of the Bethany affair the dear old Judge was inclined to stand off and criticize."

"That was the man of him. He would like to have been consulted and to have engineered the affair."

"In anticipating these revelations I really supposed that he would fall on my neck when I told him what we had done," continued Berty, thoughtfully.

"And you say he didn't—just stood back and

criticised? How funny," and Tom laughed irrepressibly.

"But he changed," pursued Berty, earnestly. "It seemed to come over him that a dreadful fate might have been poor Bethany's if we had not rescued her."

"Of course he changed—would have been a donkey if he hadn't," said Tom, disrespectfully. "You're all right, Berty—always were and always will be."

"And so are you, Tom," she responded, generously.

"However, speaking of Bethany," he went on, "no dreadful fate would have overtaken her for a while. Suppose the women had made off with her. They would have taken mighty good care of her till the ransom business was settled."

Berty shuddered. "Suppose no ransom had been given?"

"O, I fancy Bethany, being a nice child, would make friends and settle down to business. She would adapt herself to a changed environment. She would make a pretty little thief."

"Tom, don't jest on such a subject," said Berty, passionately. Then she went on in a musing tone, "Since this affair began I have thought so much of another kidnaping case that Barry told me about."

"O, that New York affair?"

"Yes—the only son of a widow. O, Tom, suppose our baby were taken from us?"

"Are you pining to be left childless and a widow?" he asked, pointedly.

"Tom, don't. You have that hopeless national habit of jesting upon every subject. Do be serious. I assure you I dream of that widow."

"Why doesn't she get her boy back?"

"She can't raise the money. She hasn't got it. Barry thinks the Smalley gang is in the affair. I wonder whether these women would know anything about it?"

"Possibly; ask them."

"I will; and Tom, as soon as we get home telephone to the fish market to have a boat sent for Barry. I want him to come up this evening and talk over this affair."

CHAPTER XXV

VISITORS FOR THE JUDGE

Two weeks later Berty and her boy were spending the day at the Judge's. She arrived early in the morning.

"Dear Judge," she said, bundling out of a cab with various packages and looking up at him as he stood on his front doorstep throwing crumbs to the sparrows, "dear Judge, I have come to spend the blessed, livelong day with you."

"I am delighted," he said, gallantly, and throwing away his bread he hurried down the steps and took the baby from her."

"Yesterday," she went on, "I was half distracted with calls upon me. 'Tom,' I said to my husband, 'if I'm spared till to-morrow morning I am going to take baby and hide for a day. You get up early in the morning and go to your mother's for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. I am going to close the house and give Daisy and the cook a holiday.'"

"And what did your husband say?" inquired the Judge, as he held open the door for her. "O, my dear lady—"

"What is it?" asked Berty, anxiously.

"This baby—he is putting something in my ear."

"Gravel," said his mother, as she stood on tiptoe and examined the side of the Judge's head. He had his hands full when we started. He is the most

mischievous baby ever born. You would better give him to me. You take the packages, and I will take him."

"No, no; he is too heavy for you to carry."

"Have you had breakfast?" inquired Berty, as the Judge went toward the dining room.

"No, not yet. I was just waiting for the children."

"Here they come," said Berty, looking up the stairway. "Good-morning, lammies."

Bethany and the boys pressed about Berty. They all loved her, and the baby was a great attraction to them. He pulled out a wisp of Bethany's hair, untied Dallas's necktie, and slapped Titus, all in the compass of a minute, but without the slightest resentment they politely crowded each other in endeavoring to get a seat near him during prayer time.

His behavior during the reading of a psalm was so disgraceful that his mother was obliged to carry him out of the room. Chuckling gayly, and not at all abashed, he came back in time for breakfast.

His exploits at the table, especially with a cream jug and his mother's plate of mush, became so exasperating that at last she put him on the floor with a crust of bread.

He was not hungry, having breakfasted earlier, so, taking his crust, he crawled under the table and polished the children's shoes with it. In huge delight Bethany and the boys, with little explosive bursts of laughter, submitted to his manipulations, while his mother talked to the Judge.

"Can you love your work and yet get tired of it?" she was inquiring searchingly of her older friend.

The Judge shook his head, not negatively, but in a thoughtful manner. "O, so tired, my dear friend, especially when the flesh grows weak."

"The ghost is willing, but the meat is weak,' a Frenchman once said," continued Berty, with a laugh. "Well, Judge, yesterday I thought I would go crazy. They began before I was out of bed. 'Mrs. Everest,' said Daisy at my door, 'the man at the Babies' Supply Depot says an accident has happened to the fresh-milk van. The cans are upset. What shall he do?' 'Do,' I said, 'the foolish man! Why, do the best he can. There are other cows. Let him ransack the town for fresh milk. Telephone to the suburban places. There is milk somewhere. We've got to have it for the River Street babies. Why does he waste time by coming to me? I put him there; let him look after his business. If he doesn't I'll discharge him.'"

"Do have some of this Cloverdale honey," said the Judge, "it is delicious."

"Now, Judge, you think I want sweetening," she said, with a mischievous twinkling of her black eyes, "but you've got to hear all my troubles. Let me see, what was the next thing? O, yes, I know—and this, too, before I was out of bed. Daisy calls through the door, 'Mrs. Everest, the footman from Miss Sally Draylittles is here. He says that his lady says that the Angora cat she bought from your cat farm is going round with its leg hanging loose. What shall she do?'"

Dallas, who was listening to Berty, began to laugh.

"I don't wonder you laugh," said Berty, indig-

nantly. "Did you ever hear of such a helpless woman trying to run an establishment? 'Tell the footman to tell Miss Draylitttle to send for a good veterinary. The cat has probably broken her leg.' Then let me see, what came next? I've got to tell you quickly while I'm cross about it, for when I get cool I shall be ashamed of myself for telling my trials, even to such dear friends as you all are."

"You in your work are hampered by inefficient persons in places of trust," said the Judge, philosophically.

"That's it in a nutshell," said Berty. "Why, the average person doesn't seem to think. My next call was to go to see a sick woman. She wasn't sick; she was troubled and uneasy. Her husband had left home in a temper the night before and hadn't come back. She frightened me and I frightened her. She poured out her woes to me, and I said, 'I don't blame him. If I were your husband I wouldn't come back for a week.' The poor creature stared at me. 'Why, look about you,' I said. 'Look at this dirty room, this filthy room. How could a man sit down in it with self-respect. Stop your crying and clean it.' And do you know, Judge, I couldn't make her see it was dirty. I sent for two men and had her moved bag and baggage into two clean rooms in that house you were good enough to buy for my poor people; and now the question is, will she have sense enough to keep it clean?"

"Reform is losing some of its rosy hues to you," the Judge observed, sententiously.

Berty laughed. "Please give me some more honey, and just you try criticising River Street.

Then you will find out where baby gets his temper. I scold those people frightfully, but I love them. Titus, are you coming to live on River Street with me when you get to be a man?" and she turned to the boy.

"No, but perhaps I can help you," he said, modestly. "I was thinking that on that stock farm grandfather is going to let me have there will be plenty of room for some cottages for poor sick folks, and I would like to have some of the children out every day."

"You dear," she said, enthusiastically; then as he began an animated conversation with Titus on the subject of farming she remarked in a low voice to the Judge, "Why, that boy has stopped stammering, hasn't he?"

The Judge nodded. "I will tell you about it presently."

When the two boys and the little girl were excused from the table, and got up to go to school, there were simultaneous squeals of laughter from them. Their shoes were all slipping off their feet.

"It's that cute little baby," observed Bethany, "he's untied all our shoes."

"Mine are not only untied, but off my feet," said Berty, unconcernedly. "Perhaps Higby will be good enough to find them."

The old man, who was grinning with delight over the baby's antics, found one in the coal hod. The other was discovered an hour later out in the yard, where it had been carried by Bylow the dog, he having probably picked it up in the back hall, where it had been thrown by Tom, junior.

"Why, I believe," said the Judge, shuffling his feet about, "that the little rascal has untied my laces. Dallas, just look before you leave the room. I dislike fussing with my feet after I am fully dressed."

Dallas went down on his knees, neatly fastened the Judge's laces, and put his feet on a stool where they would be slightly out of baby's way.

"Who is going to take Bethany to school this morning?" asked the Judge.

"It's my turn," replied Titus.

"Good-bye, Daddy Grandpa," said the little girl, coming to kiss him.

"Good-bye," he said, "mind and wait for Jennie to come and bring you home. Don't leave Mrs. Hume's alone."

"No, dear Daddy Grandpa." Then she went on, anxiously, "Will the baby be here when Bethany comes home?"

"I hope so," said the Judge, politely.

"Yes, he will," said Berty, "that dreadful baby will be here for luncheon, and for dinner, too, if he is not turned out before then."

The Judge smiled. "He won't be. I have a fellow-feeling for that baby. Many a time I have heard my dear departed mother say that I was one of the worst children she ever saw."

"O, Judge," said Berty, vivaciously, "is that true? Can it be that there is hope for my baby of becoming a man like you?"

"Tut! tut! he will be a far better one."

"Judge, will you take him and bring him up?"

The Judge tried to repress a shudder, but could

not. He liked Berty's baby, and had great patience with him as an occasional visitor, but as steady company—"No," he said, thoughtfully, "that baby needs a mother."

"So he does," said Berty, catching him up in her arms, "mother's great fat lump of flesh with a naughty little mind inside. Now, Judge, what are you going to do this morning?"

"I am going to entertain you," he said, politely.

"No, no, I only stay on condition that I don't interfere with your regular occupations. Baby and I can amuse ourselves."

"I assure you that I would rather stay with you than do anything else," said the Judge.

"Well," she returned, "you are a truthful man, and I believe you. Will you take me to see the pigeons first thing? But what shall we do with baby?"

"Higby," said the Judge, "you are fond of children. You amuse him."

The old man deliberately came forward and received the crowing baby in his arms.

Young Tom was too much accustomed to strangers to object, and at once he was fascinated by Higby's teeth, which were rather large and curiously shaped. Insinuating all his pink fingers in the man's mouth, he tried to take them out. They would not come.

"If you don't object to that, Higby," said Mrs. Everest, "it is a sure way to amuse him."

Higby gurgled a reply in the affirmative, and Berty went away with the Judge.

"O, the lovely creatures," she exclaimed, when

a few minutes later they entered the pigeon loft, "and how tame they are!"

The pigeons were flying all over the Judge, lighting on his head, his shoulders, his arms, and gently tapping him with their beaks.

"They are becoming tamer every day," he said. "It is wonderful what kind treatment will do in developing the intelligence of the lower order of creation."

"I suppose Titus pets these birds very much."

"O, yes, he and Bethany are indefatigable. I watched him at first, for I thought he might neglect them, but he does not."

"I used to keep pigeons," said Berty, wistfully. "I was very fond of them."

"I am sure Titus would give you a pair or two, if you wish to start again. He won't let everybody have them, but he would be sure of your devotion to them."

"I should love to have some," she said, enthusiastically. "By the way, Judge, tell me about his stammering. Is he really cured?"

"You noticed that he spoke slowly."

"Yes, I did."

"He is trying to cure himself, really trying hard now. He got a shock the other day that started him in the right direction. It was after Airy Tingsby's last visit here. Just as soon as she went away I called him to me. 'Titus,' I said, 'did you notice that Airy stammered quite often during dinner, and in the evening?'"

"'Yes,' he said, reluctantly, 'he had.'"

"'Do you know,' I said, 'that that little girl has

set up a lofty ideal for herself. She wishes to be a perfect lady.'

"Titus said he knew that.

" 'And you,' I said, 'are going to be a stumbling-block. So anxious is she to imitate the members of this family in every particular that she is going to copy our bad as well as our good qualities. Now, don't you think you ought to endeavor to shake off this habit of stammering?'

"Titus asked me if I thought she was imitating him purposely.

" 'Do you think so yourself?' I asked.

"He gave me to understand that he did not, that she was so consumed by a burning, intense desire to improve that she unconsciously caught up everything he said, absorbed all his words, and his mannerisms with them.

"I did not need to say anything further. The boy was perfectly upset over the affair, so much so that I wondered. He was ashamed of standing in the way of a girl—and such a fragile piece of ambition as Airy. So he set himself resolutely to conquer his failing, and you see he is making good progress. He slips sometimes, but not often."

"Titus is a noble boy," said Berty, warmly. "He is going to make a fine man."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE ONLY SON OF A WIDOW

THE Judge looked gratified by Berty's praise of Titus; then, leading the way to the nest boxes, he pointed to some young pigeons to her.

"O, the darling things!" exclaimed Berty, looking in at the downy creatures, "and all in twos. Do they always have two young ones at a time? My pigeons never nested."

"Usually, sometimes only one. Of course, these pigeons are not allowed to lay during the cold weather. They are just beginning, now that winter is thinking of yielding to spring."

"Just look at them trying to hiss at me, Judge. Do they know that I am a stranger?"

"Certainly—try these homers."

Berty put her slim hand in between two young homers, who promptly beat it with their unfledged wings.

"Naughty little squabs," said Berty, caressingly. "I suppose Titus will fly these homers when they grow up. Are they workers?"

"Yes, the parents have a record of five hundred miles, but they were not bred in this loft, so he can't let them out. These young ones would come back."

"Training homing pigeons must be great sport," said Berty, enthusiastically.

"It is. Even Dallas is interested in that. He has been reading that country doctors use homing

pigeons extensively in their practice, and he may have to start in the country. By the way, speaking of doctors, some one said Mafferty is ill; is he?"

"Yes, but only with a cold; nothing serious. His memories of the last few weeks keep him cheerful."

"I suppose he is as much elated as ever?"

"More so—he is the proudest man in Riverport," and Berty laid a hand on an elusive fantail and clasped her gently. "No one could be more delighted at the turn affairs took with regard to the kidnapers. His well-laid plans succeeded."

"No credit was given him by the press," remarked the Judge. "No reporters interviewed him, but perhaps he does not care for that sort of thing."

"Not at all. He shuns notoriety. All the people that he cared about gave him the glory. You, in going out to his island, and wringing his hand, conferred a tremendous honor upon him. You and the chief of police are his heroes, and at police headquarters he stands very high, and is correspondingly set up by it."

"And your good opinion," said the Judge, pointedly; "he knows he has that."

Berty smiled. "Amusing to retail, he does not value my praise half as much as he does yours, or any man's. He is sure of me. I befriended him when he was friendless, and he thinks I would like him no matter what he did. He likes me to approve; but still, nothing I could say or do would come up to that handshake of yours."

"Remember your promise to let me know if there is anything I can do for him."

"I will. Just now he is well enough as he is."

"By the way, are you still going to see those unfortunate women?"

"O, yes, every day I have a dreadful feeling about them. I in one way am responsible for their captivity. I vowed that I would do all I could to mitigate it. The first few days, as I told you when we last met, they would have nothing to say to me. Then they began to thaw slightly. Little by little they seemed to understand that I had their good at heart."

"Did you say anything to them about the other kidnaping case?"

"Yes, but not until three days ago. I told them that their trial would soon come off; that if they were to give any information about the stolen child it might influence public opinion in their favor. I could get nothing out of them. They flatly denied all knowledge of the missing boy, but at the very first instant of my mentioning the affair I caught a gleam of intelligence in the eye of one of them. She knew something about it. So what do you think I did, dear Judge?"

The Judge pushed away a pouter that was puffing and swelling out on his shoulder. "Well," he said, mischievously, "your actions are sometimes unexpected."

She laughed gayly. "To be true to my reputation, they were in this case. I telegraphed to New York to the little widow. I said, 'Come to me, and possibly I may give you news of your boy.' The poor little woman actually flew here. I wish you could have seen her, Judge. Such a teary, weary, eerie sort of a widow. All big eyes and veil, and so

consumed with sorrow, which one could not wonder at."

"Did you take her to the jail?"

"I did. I confronted her with those two young women. I had them both brought into the same room. I made no explanation, either to them or to the widow, whose name is Mrs. Tralee. When the two women, or girls—for neither of them is much over twenty—came in I abruptly pointed to them, and said to Mrs. Tralee, 'Those girls can tell you where to get information about your lost boy.'

"It was pitiful to see that little widow's face, Judge. Just imagine her—alone in the world, one pet boy, and he snatched from her. She gave me one look, one terrible look, as if to say, 'Are you deceiving me?' I shook my head solemnly. Those girls either knew where her boy was or could tell us who did know. I would have staked my life on it.

"Mrs. Tralee wasted no time in preliminaries. She fell right on her knees before them. She, a rich woman, cultured and refined and exquisitely dressed, took those degraded creatures in her outstretched arms, she pleaded with them as for her soul's salvation.

"It was dreadful, Judge. I never heard anything more affecting in my life. I just stood and cried like a baby, and I heard a sniffing behind the door where the jailer stood, and when we came out I noticed his eyes were all red.

"At first the two girls tried to laugh it off. They looked sheepishly at each other, but it was no laughing matter. Despite themselves, and hardened as they undoubtedly are, something womanly arose in

them, something responded to that poor little woman's cries and groans.

"As I said before, it was terrible. It gave me a kind of exquisite pain to listen to Mrs. Tralee. She assured the girls that she was telling the truth in the sight of her Maker when she stated that the ransom demanded for her son was one she could not pay. The money left to her by her husband was not in her sole control. She would sacrifice every cent she herself owned, but she absolutely could not touch the fortune left in trust for her son.

"The two girls looked at each other. They were getting uneasy and shaky. One whispered something, the other responded, then they tried to withdraw their dresses from Mrs. Tralee's frantic grasp. At last one of them, with a kind of desperate look, bent over and said, 'Go to this address in New York—we can't, and shan't tell you a word more,' and she rattled off something in Mrs. Tralee's ears.

"Then, without waiting for her thanks, they pulled themselves away and ran to the door, and the jailer took them to their cells.

"Mrs. Tralee took my head between her hands. She gave me such a look, Judge—such a look from those big eyes of hers. There was no need of speech. Then she fairly flew to the railway station, and took a special train for New York; and I haven't heard a word from her since."

"How long ago did you say that was?"

"Three days. I thought she would telegraph me. I hope that those girls weren't deceiving her. I spoke to them about it yesterday when I took them some things to eat, and they were utterly unresponsive."

"I imagine from what you have told me of this affair," said the Judge, shrewdly, "that they have not misled that bereaved woman. You will hear from her later. She is probably in communication with the child-stealers; quite likely, agreeing upon some concession—very illegal, but very easily understood. But come, these pigeons are getting to be too aggressive. Let us go out and see the rest of the live stock. I know you like horses."

"Love them," said Berty, intensely, "and I want to see the cow, too. Brick said you had a new one. By the way, how is the boy getting on?"

"Well, I don't know that the phrase 'getting on' applies to Brick," observed the Judge, cheerfully. "It is rather a kind of backward and forward motion that keeps him in about the same place. I know I have felt it my duty to raise Roblee's wages in order to enable him to bear up under this new species of trial."

"The Lord will reward you, Judge," said Berty, heartily.

"I take no credit to myself, not a particle," said the Judge. "I come in contact with him but little. He regards Titus as his special oppressor. Look up there, Mrs. Everest."

Berty raised her eyes. The Judge was standing in the open door of the stable pointing toward the house. "Can you see two little gray balls of down up at the top of that old elm?"

"No, sir, I can't."

"Look again—just where the topmost branches extend under the gutter at the roof's edge."

"O, yes, I do see something—those are surely not

Dallas's little owls that Bethany told me about the other day?"

"Yes, they sit there asleep all day. At night they fly about. What did Bethany tell you about them?"

"After I rescued her from those women she seemed greatly relieved, and confided to me a slight misgiving she had had. Suppose they had taken her to New York, and had not been able to find Daddy Grandpa. 'I tell you, Mrs. Everest, what Bethany would do,' she said, sweetly, to me. 'Bethany would open her window at night and call 'Frisco and 'Mento, Dallas's two little owls that fly in the dark, and she would say, "Go home quickly and tell Daddy Grandpa that Bethany wants him."'"

The Judge was listening intently. "How curious is the working of a child's mind!" he said. "In that statement she confesses a belief that I was here all the time, that I had not gone to New York. She must have had an intuitive distrust of those women."

"I believe she had," said Berty, decidedly. "It was just her sweet, yielding nature that made her go with them."

"She is not always sweet and yielding. You should see her when Airy Tingsby is about."

"I know she does not like Airy," said Berty, in an amused voice, "but Airy likes her."

The Judge looked grave. "Bethany is trying to overcome her dislike. She has Airy here a good deal lately."

"And you have put Airy in Miss Featherby's school, I hear," said Berty, with slight curiosity.

The Judge smiled. "Yes, you know Dallas un-

dertook to instruct her. He mystified me greatly, for I knew he did not mind doing it, and yet he suddenly became loath to go out to the Tingsby cottage to give Airy her lessons."

"Of course, now, you understand that that was in consequence of his instructions from us, to keep about the house as much as possible."

"Yes, now, I understand, but then I did not. However, I reasoned the matter out with myself. Airy would be better under a woman's care, so I called on Miss Featherby. I had some scruples about putting Airy in a boarding school."

"And such a fashionable one," murmured Berty.

"But Miss Featherby is such a sensible, such a very sensible person," continued the Judge, "that I very much wished Airy to be under her care."

"You really like the poor little mortal, Judge, I do believe," exclaimed Berty, irrepressibly.

The Judge looked cautiously over his shoulder as if he were afraid the horses and the cow might be eavesdropping.

"I do not like her, I do not like her," he said, seriously.

Berty burst into a merry peal of laughter. "No one does, yet. Why is it she makes us all stand round?"

"I don't like her," repeated the Judge, cautiously, "and yet I find myself in the presence of a very strong young personality when I am with her. That strength will be expended in some way. If I can train it, perhaps I ought to."

"She is very clever, very peculiar, and very fascinating," said Berty, succinctly. "She could twist

me round her little finger if she wished to, but she doesn't. Her ideals are not mine."

"She has affection, too," said the Judge, warmly. "She came rushing in the morning after Bethany's attempted capture by those women and alarmed me by her demonstrations of anger and alarm."

"I suppose she does not come here very much now that she is at Miss Featherby's."

"She comes whenever she is allowed to go out. If it is to go downtown with a teacher she takes us in on her way."

Berty laughed again. "You will have to adopt her too, Judge; that is, if you have no scruples about lifting her out of her sphere."

"I have scruples, but what am I to do? Is not ambition a good thing? Mrs. Tingsby does not want to rise, Airy does. I have talked very seriously to the child. I have explained to her that her wild ambition is going to create a gulf between her and her family. She says it won't."

"It will," remarked Berty, decidedly.

"Well, my course is clear," said the Judge. "I feel it. The spectacle of that little sick creature sitting up at night, studying in a cheerless room, haunted me. I have put her where she is warm and comfortable, where her very environment is enough to cheer and uplift her."

"How does she get on with the other girls?"

The Judge smiled. "Peculiarly. I fancied that she would have a hard time with them on account of her different social station. However, I said to her, 'No stories, Airy. Tell the truth about yourself.'"

"And did she?"

"She did," said the Judge, laconically. Then, after a time, he laughed suddenly and heartily. "The truth in her case so far transcended the schoolgirls' anticipations or realizations that they looked upon it as the wildest absurdity."

Berty seemed puzzled.

The Judge repressed his amusement, and looking down at her in his fatherly, benevolent way said, "Imagine to yourself, my dear Mrs. Everest, a schoolroom full of girls, all interested in the new-comer—I have this straight from Airy—she, poor child, sitting grim and composed, ready for anything. Finally, one girl plucks up courage enough to ask Airy what her name is, where she has lived, how many servants her mother kept, what her father's business is, what church she goes to, how much money she has in the bank, how many silk dresses her mother owns, and so on."

Berty laughed gleefully. "I know them—that is schoolgirls—they are so delightfully silly. What did Airy say?"

"The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

"And the girls were staggered, I suppose," chuckled Berty.

"Staggered and confounded. Then Airy says they looked her over. Having foreseen something of this, in a dim and masculine way, I had taken care to provide my protégée with a carefully selected wardrobe. Her clothes were not showy, but they were what you women call elegant. I suppose you will think it the foolish whim of an old man when

I tell you that I myself interviewed the dressmaker who fitted Airy out. I told her to line her little garments with the best of satin."

Berty leaned against the stable doorway and laughed long and irrepressibly. "Well, Judge, you are the greatest man—"

"And I gave her a gold watch," he went on, with twinkling eyes—"a very little one, but very exquisite—and a chain of wonderful workmanship."

"You dear man!" exclaimed Berty, impulsively. "You did all this not to encourage vanity, but to spare a child's feelings."

"Well," said the Judge, modestly, "I did not plan to deceive Airy's schoolmates, but the little witches had heard of my other protégée, Bethany, and her rich grandfather, so Airy says they received her truthful account of herself as the most absurd kind of fairy tale. They shouted with laughter over her laconic description of the penury to which she had been accustomed. Then she was received into the inner circle as a kind of mystery. She says that the girls think her a foreigner, on account of her dark complexion, and this opinion is heightened by her poor English. The most accredited rumor is that she is an Italian princess, stolen from a magnificent castle by gypsies."

Berty was convulsed with amusement. "And how does Airy take all this?"

"Philosophically," laughed the Judge. "Really she is an astonishing girl. Details don't concern her as much as they do most people. She grasps the whole. Dress and environment are secondary things with her, things not to be disregarded, but

not to be overestimated. The primary thing is to get an education. Then she wishes to earn money, and repay me for what I have done for her, and also to support her family—a heavy burden for such young shoulders.”

“I wonder what she is going to be when she grows up?” remarked Berty, meditatively.

“Now that brings me to something that I wish to ask your advice about,” said the Judge. “Ever since the attempt was made to steal Bethany from us I have been thinking that I need some young person to look after my children—particularly the two little girls.”

“Are you counting Airy in the family?” said Berty, significantly. “I thought she would end by establishing herself here.”

“How can one defeat such an ingenious child?” responded the Judge, frankly. “She began by calling, then dropping in at mealtimes. Really, she spent the most of her time here before she went to Miss Featherby’s, and I know that when holidays come we shall have her altogether.”

“In which case you will need a lady housekeeper,” said Berty, promptly, “or Airy will rule you all. Now I know just the person for you, Judge.”

“Who is it?” he inquired, with interest.

“My friend Nancy Armitage Steele.”

“You don’t mean little Nancy, the daughter of the late General Armitage?”

“The same, Judge; but she is a tall young married woman now, and, unfortunately, a widow.”

“What! That child married!”

“Child—she is twenty-five years old.”

"How time flies!" said the Judge, musingly. "It seems only the other day that the General and I were lads in school. But how is it that his daughter needs to support herself."

"Her husband's health failed, then after a long illness he died. He left Nancy nothing and her father had left her nothing, so she had to go to work."

"Poor Armitage—I knew that he made some bad investments, but I thought he could leave his child a competency. However, I have rather lost sight of the family."

"Yes, it is some time since they left here. Now, Judge, don't you think Mrs. Nancy would preside charmingly over your household? She is the sweetest girl."

"I do, indeed," said the Judge, heartily, "if she would not be too much of a fine lady to have a motherly or sisterly care of the children. You see, Mrs. Blodgett is getting old, and her department is the housekeeping. I want the next best thing to a mother for those little girls."

"Nancy is at present mothering two hundred and fifty children in an orphan asylum," said Berty, warmly, "and mothering them so well that the board of managers has offered to increase her salary ever so much if she will stay. But the responsibility is too much for her. She is a great worker, but she is not very strong. Next week she is coming to visit me. I know of several positions that have been offered her, but I don't believe she has anything in view that would suit her as well as this one with her father's old friend."

"I shall be obliged if you will arrange an interview with her for me," said the Judge, "but don't say anything decisive. Twenty-five does not seem very young to you, but a girl of that age appears like a child to me, and I don't want to adopt any more children."

"You used not to be afraid," replied Berty, smilingly. "Nancy has an old head on her young shoulders."

"Mrs. Everest," said the Judge, suddenly, "I am keeping you in a draught. Let us step back here and see the horses."

Berty went with him; then, a sudden thought of the baby coming over her, she hurried the Judge into the house.

Baby had been good—a perfect angel, and his proud young mother took him upstairs, where he fell asleep in the Judge's study.

The Judge himself went downtown, and the tired Berty, putting down her head on the sofa beside young Tom, fell asleep, and did not wake till Bethany and the Judge came home for luncheon.

After lunch there was a long drive with the Judge. Baby again was good, but upon coming back to the avenue he distinguished himself. Before dinner was announced he had successively worn out the Judge, his mother, Dallas, Titus, and Bethany. He had beaten Higby with a hearthbrush, pulled out two of Sukey's tail feathers and sent her shrieking out to the balcony, upset a bottle of ink on the handsome study carpet, torn leaves out of a valuable Shakespeare that he snatched from the table, and generally conducted himself with such

shameless impropriety that his young mother at last slapped his hands.

He promptly whipped hers. "Never mind, dear Judge," she said, with an imploring glance at him. "After dinner you will be rid of this nightmare."

The Judge smiled cheerfully. "I assure you I have not suffered. If you worry I shall suffer, so please forgive your baby. He is full of animal spirits."

She kissed the little hands that she was holding, then looked up as Jennie uttered her name.

The modest, pretty young maid stood in the doorway and gazed alternatively at the Judge and at Berty.

"There's a lady downstairs," she said, doubtfully. "She asked if Judge Sancroft lived here. She said she must see Mrs. Everest. It was something very special. Her name is Mrs. Tralee, and she has a little boy with her."

Berty gave a joyful cry. "O, Judge, dear Judge, she has got her boy. Come downstairs with me. Jennie, look after the baby—I can't take him down in the parlor; he would demolish every bit of bric-a-brac there. Come, dear Judge," and seizing his hand she drew him from the room.

A little, a very little woman stood in the middle of the large parlor. The Judge gazed intently at her. Berty had spoken truly when she had said that Mrs. Tralee was mostly eyes and veil—and what eyes!

The Judge stepped back. He felt himself an intruder. This was no common scene, and there was no formal introduction. The two women stood for an instant looking at the little boy who accompanied

the lady. Then they fell on each other's necks—that is, Bertie and the little widow.

There was a sound of crying and kissing, and the Judge quietly turned and was about to withdraw when Bertie called to him.

“O, Judge, Judge,” she said, “this is the boy—the lost boy. O, my dear Mrs. Tralee, where did you get him. Tell me about it.”

The strange lady was gazing in rapt admiration at Bertie, who had run to the little lad and was holding his hand and earnestly looking into his eyes.

Mrs. Tralee turned to the Judge. “Sir,” she said, simply, “the only son of a widow—they stole him from me. But this dear girl found him, and I bought him. I bought back my precious child. Can you wonder that I worship her?”

As she spoke she pointed to Bertie. Her tone was animated, even passionate, and the Judge nodded comprehendingly.

“O, I am so tired,” said Mrs. Tralee, suddenly dropping into a chair. “For weeks I have scarcely slept for grief, and now I cannot sleep for joy.”

Bertie turned round suddenly. “You are coming right home with me,” she said, “and I am going to put you in a quiet room where you can rest, and I will watch your boy every minute while you sleep. Dear Judge, may we have a carriage?”

Mrs. Tralee sat gazing at Bertie in mute acquiescence. The expression in her eyes was almost painful, and the Judge averted his head. “How women suffer!” he murmured to himself, as he went to the telephone for a carriage. “And how they can comfort each other!”

CHAPTER XXVII

MR. HITTAKER CALLS ON THE JUDGE

A FEW weeks later on a lovely spring day Titus, hammer in hand, stood prying open a box that had just come for him by express.

While he was energetically pulling out nails and removing strips of wood Brick came lounging up the steps holding a mayflower between his teeth.

"Mass' Titus, Jennie she say an ole gen'l'man jus' come from New York want to see de Jedge."

"'Jedge' has gone driving," said Titus, briefly.

"Well, but dat ole gen'l'man won't take no for yes. He says he mus' see some one."

"Bring him out here, then."

Brick hesitated. He had some idea of propriety, and he did not like to think of "young Mass' Titus" receiving company in the pigeon loft.

Titus understood him. "Do you suppose I'd leave the pigeons?," he said, indignantly. "They've had a hot, tiresome journey. I've got to feed and water them. Bring the old gentleman out here if he can't wait. If he can, I'll go in the house later."

Brick disappeared, and presently returned, followed by a thin, slight, elderly man who carried his hands in his pockets.

"Sorry to bring you out here, sir," said Titus, politely, "but these birds are suffering and I can't

leave them. Will you sit down?" and he nodded toward a stool.

The gentleman remained standing, and with a pair of remarkably small eyes listlessly surveyed the roomy, bright pigeon loft, the birds at the open windows, and the wiry, athletic young figure of Titus himself.

There was a weary sneer on his face. Titus saw it, but unconcernedly went on with his work.

"What is the good of all these?" said the stranger at last, and he withdrew one of his hands from his pocket and waved it at the birds.

"O, I like to hear them laugh and talk and fight, just the way we do," said Titus, calmly.

"Laugh and talk," repeated the elderly man, and he straightened himself and looked like one trying to force himself to take an interest in something.

"Yes, sir, they have their language just as we have ours. Look at that young one there. He is crying because his stepfather is beating him. Here, stepfather, come away."

The man's head sank on his breast. He seemed to be thinking deeply, but Titus shrewdly guessed that his mind was not on the relations of birds to each other.

"Looks as if he'd had some trouble," thought the boy to himself, then he said aloud, "Come in here, pigeons," and he gently guided the two prisoners he had released from their traveling box into a large cage.

"I always put strangers in this cage for a few days," he remarked, in a cheerful, explanatory way,

"so they can look about them. Pigeons hate to be rushed into a crowd."

The stranger roused himself and gazed at the newcomers. "What kind of pigeons do you call them?" he asked, in languid curiosity.

"Pouters," replied Titus.

"They look as if they had their stomachs under their chins," said the elderly man, with slight animation. "Ugly things!"

"They're New Yorkers," said Titus, slyly. Then he added, "I don't think they're beautiful myself, but I wanted to have them. Here, pigeons, have some canary seed," and he put a dish in beside them.

"Where is your grandfather?" asked the stranger, abruptly. "That is, if you are Judge Sancroft's grandson. I think some one said you were."

"Yes, sir, I am. My grandfather is driving with my adopted sister Bethany."

"Adopted sister," said his companion, thoughtfully. "Is that the Hittaker child?"

"Yes, sir—Hittaker-Smith. My grandfather had some kind of papers made out. We're going to hold on to little Bethany."

A heavy shadow passed over the man's face, and Titus thought he heard him sigh. "I heard about her," he said, dreamily. "They said kidnapers tried to steal her."

A sudden thought flashed into Titus's mind. "You're not Mr. Hittaker, are you, sir?" he asked, sharply, and he stared in boyish curiosity at his visitor.

The man nodded slightly. "Yes, yes, my name is Hittaker."

Titus looked deeply sympathetic, and his eye ran over his caller's black clothes. "I say, sir," he murmured, sympathetically, "we were awfully sorry for you. Bethany cried when she heard about the little children being drowned."

At this statement Titus lost the attention of his companion. Mr. Hittaker's face became more dreamy. His mind was wandering away into regions where the boy could not follow it. He thought Mr. Hittaker looked ill. He certainly was in a peculiar state mentally. Minute after minute he stood silently, his eyes fixed on vacancy.

Titus leaned against the wall and watched him. Finally, just as his young limbs began to ache from inaction, Mr. Hittaker roused himself, turned to him, and said, abruptly, "We were speaking of your grandfather. When will he come home?"

"Probably not till near dinner time. It is such a fine day."

"I planned to take the seven o'clock train back to New York," said Mr. Hittaker, slowly, "but it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter."

"Stay all night, sir," said Titus, hospitably. "Then you will have time to talk to my grandfather. But," he went on, slowly, "I hope you are not to ask him for Bethany. It wouldn't be any use. We can't give her up."

Mr. Hittaker stared moodily at him and made no reply.

"My grandfather doesn't think an awful sight of money," said the boy, proudly.

"Money," repeated his caller, and a gleam illuminated his small eyes and sharp, shrewd face. "Show

me the man that doesn't care for it, or the woman, either."

"Grandfather does care for it, in a way," Titus went on, earnestly. "He thinks you can do a lot of good and be a great power in the world if you have plenty of money, but he preaches to us all the time about not thinking too much of riches."

"Easy to talk," replied Mr. Hittaker, with some show of interest in the subject. "If you were that black stable boy you couldn't have all this," and he looked about the well appointed loft.

"Sir," said Titus, intensely, "the other evening I was walking with grandfather. We passed a tiny house in the suburbs. A boy was nailing away at a box and whistling like a good fellow. We stopped and spoke to him. He was making a house for his rabbits out of two big soap boxes—and, by the way, they were Hittaker soap boxes; I saw the name. When we left him my grandfather said, 'Do you suppose you are any happier than that boy?'"

"'No, sir,' I said, 'I don't.'"

"Then my grandfather went on: 'Don't run away with the idea that no happiness can exist in cottages. The contented mind makes its own dwelling.'"

Mr. Hittaker gazed in an uninterested way at a box of sawdust. He was too old, and too self-centered, and too absent-minded, to be moved by Titus's eloquence; and then, when he had been a boy, he had had no wise grandfather to train his youthful mind. A grasping, miserly father had made a grasping, miserly son.

Titus broke off with a slight shrug of his shoulders. He was half pitiful, half inimical to his vis-

itor. "Come into the house, sir," he said, hospitably. "I can leave these birds now. Perhaps the time won't seem so long if you are looking at grandfather's books."

Mr. Hittaker did not care for reading. The most interesting books to him were account books. However, he followed Titus willingly enough.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE JUDGE REVIEWS HIS FAMILY

WEEKS and months flew by. Spring passed, summer came and went, autumn followed, then winter and Christmas and the Christmas holidays.

It was just one year since the Judge and Titus had found Bethany trotting along Broadway. It was considerably over a year since the adoption of the pigeon princess into the family, and she was now a fully matured bird.

She sat in her basket by the fireside. Higby had just been in and carefully arranged the wire screen, so that no sparks from the wood fire should fly out on her.

Sukey was listening for the Judge's footstep. Dinner was over some time ago. He ought to be coming to his study.

The Judge, after dinner, had put on his cap and had gone out to the stable. He wished to review his family, to see that they were all happy and comfortable.

To his great satisfaction, he found Roblee and Brick together. The old coachman had brought the boy into his room. He was teaching him to read. Outside it was cold and dreary. A wild wind was blowing, and the air was full of gathering snowflakes. Inside Roblee's apartment it was snug and comfortable. At a little table drawn up under the electric light sat Roblee, his feet on a coil of hot-

water pipes, his mouth open nearly all the time to correct Brick's innumerable mistakes as he struggled through the chapters of *Oliver Twist*.

The Judge stood at the door watching them. "Do you like that book, Brick?" he said, suddenly.

The two inmates of the room turned round, then, seeing who it was, rose respectfully.

"Sit down," said the Judge, and coming into the room he took a chair himself and for a few minutes talked kindly to them.

Roblee was certainly much bothered with Brick, but he was certainly much benefited by having some young life under the roof with him.

After the Judge left his room he turned into the pigeon loft. The sleepy, contented birds gave him bright glances.

"You are out of the coming storm," he murmured to himself, as he went downstairs to look at the horses and the cow. When he emerged from the stable, and the biting wind struck his face, he looked up at the big, brightly lighted house. Up under those dark eaves he knew a few street pigeons were nestling.

"Their footing is precarious," he said. "I will have a carpenter come and make a better shelter for them. I cannot bear to think that anything under my care should suffer this cold weather. Is that you, Bylow?" he went on, as something touched his knee.

"Good dog," and he stooped down and patted the now respectable member of society. "Go into the stable. It is too cold for a short-haired dog to be outside," and he opened the door for him.

As he turned something passed his face. He

heard nothing, but he knew that one of the owls had flown by on its noiseless wings.

“'Frisco and 'Mento,” he said, with a smile, “having your night’s spin? Well, there is a comfortable box for you above when you get through wandering, and you know it. Strange,” he murmured, as he continued his way to the house, “how the whole creation not only groans together, but rejoices together, and is linked together. I used not to think of the dumb creatures; but it is easy to go down, even to the owls, when one begins to care for the children. Ah! that is a pretty sight!” and he stopped short and looked in the window.

The curtains were not drawn. Down in the little dining room for the servants Martha the cook and Jennie, Betty, and old Higby were seated about a blazing fire. Martha was rubbing some kind of ointment on her hands, Jennie and Betty were sewing, and Mrs. Blodgett, enthroned in a big rocking-chair at the head of the table, was reading to them—reading somewhat pompously and condescendingly, but also in a most satisfactory manner, judging from the frequent smiles of her auditors. Higby, indeed, sometimes transgressed by laughing too irrepressibly, upon which occasions Mrs. Blodgett interrupted her reading, took off her glasses, and solemnly scolded him.

The Judge came softly into the house, so that he would not disturb them, and passed quietly upstairs.

Ah! here was the best picture of all, and he paused at the parlor door.

Mrs. Nancy Steele had arrived; the Judge had engaged her to become lady housekeeper, mother-in-

general, adviser-in-chief, and whatever was needed to make a perfect superintendent for his family.

She was succeeding admirably, and the Judge gazed in intense admiration at the slender, graceful figure at the piano. Mrs. Nancy was charming, very ladylike, and very forceful, under a quiet, almost a languid exterior.

The children were charmed with her. Bethany stood close to her, begging her to sing again. Airy sat near by, quiet and watchful, her eyes glued to Mrs. Nancy's face. The Judge knew that both little girls adored her, and he was delighted, for he had given them the young widow as a model.

Airy was spending a part of her Christmas holidays at 110 Grand Avenue—the larger part, the Judge shrewdly guessed it would be.

Mrs. Steele spoke with a slight, a very slight drawl, and to the Judge's amusement Airy had already acquired this, though she had only been in the house a few days with her. She also had put on a black dress, because she so much admired the young widow's trailing, somber garments.

Dallas and Titus were playing some game at a little table and occasionally glancing up at the group by the piano.

Their faces were all happy. "Peace and good will," murmured the Judge. "How I wish my dear wife could look in on this sight. It reminds me of the happy times we had when we first came to this house. For many years this room has been desolate. Now it is again sanctified by the presence of a good woman and promising children. Now if they will only turn out well! God grant it, and give

me grace so to train them that they may be shining lights in this troublous world!" and casting a farewell glance at the occupants of the handsome room the Judge went on his way to his study.

Sukey was overjoyed to see him. She strutted toward the doorway, spreading her tail and cooing with pleasure.

"The only thing I have left," said the Judge, cheerfully; "that is, the only thing under my special jurisdiction. Mrs. Steele has relieved me of a great weight of care."

Now he could spend the evening after his own fashion, safe from any interruption from Bethany, or Airy, or the boys, he reflected, with a deep sigh of satisfaction.

But could he? He had scarcely opened his book when they were all hurrying in upon him—the elegant Mrs. Nancy drawn on by impetuous Bethany, and Titus, Dallas, and Airy bringing up the rear.

"Grandfather," said Titus, imperiously; "Dear Daddy Grandpa," exclaimed Bethany; "Mr. Judge," said Airy, solemnly; and "Dear Judge," said the young widow, smilingly, "the children absolutely refuse to play a new guessing game I want to teach them unless you are in it."

The Judge took off his spectacles and blandly surveyed the young faces about him. "Will it take long?"

"O, no, sir," said Dallas, eagerly, "I half know it now. We can easily stop at Bethany's bedtime."

"Mrs. Steele says I may sit up half an hour later than usual, you naughty Dallas," interposed Bethany, resentfully.

The Judge smiled. Bethany occasionally showed a little bit of temper. Well, she had been rather spoiled lately, and he was afraid that some foolish people had been talking to her about her rich grandfather.

He had had rather a trying interview with Mr. Hittaker. In the first place, being two men so absolutely unlike, they had found no common ground on which to stand. Then Mr. Hittaker had been painfully absent-minded. It had been almost impossible to induce him to concentrate his attention on the subject of Bethany, though it was for the purpose of talking about her that he had come to see the Judge.

He evidently was not much interested in her. All the mind and heart that he had seemed to have been buried with his dead daughter and her children. However, before leaving, he gave the Judge to understand that he regarded Bethany as the only remaining member of his family besides himself, and in the event of his death she would receive what property he had to leave.

He had at one time in their interview expressed a desire that Bethany should come to New York to live with him.

This desire the Judge kindly but promptly told him could not be gratified. Inwardly he added a resolve that not for all the wealth of the Union would he deliver Bethany up to the training of so self-centered a man.

Mr. Hittaker did not seem to feel disappointed. Indeed, so strange a state of mind had he been in that he had not even asked to see the child. It was

the Judge who suggested having her come in the room.

He had expressed a little curiosity, though, on the subject of her kidnapers, and had shown some satisfaction after hearing that Smalley and the two women were serving long terms of imprisonment. The Judge told him that everything was being done to influence them for good.

"Daddy Grandpa!" said Bethany, stroking his hand.

The Judge called back his wandering thoughts. While he had been busy with his reminiscences Mrs. Steele and the children were waiting. "Certainly, certainly, my dears," he said, "I will play your game with you. Shall we go downstairs?"

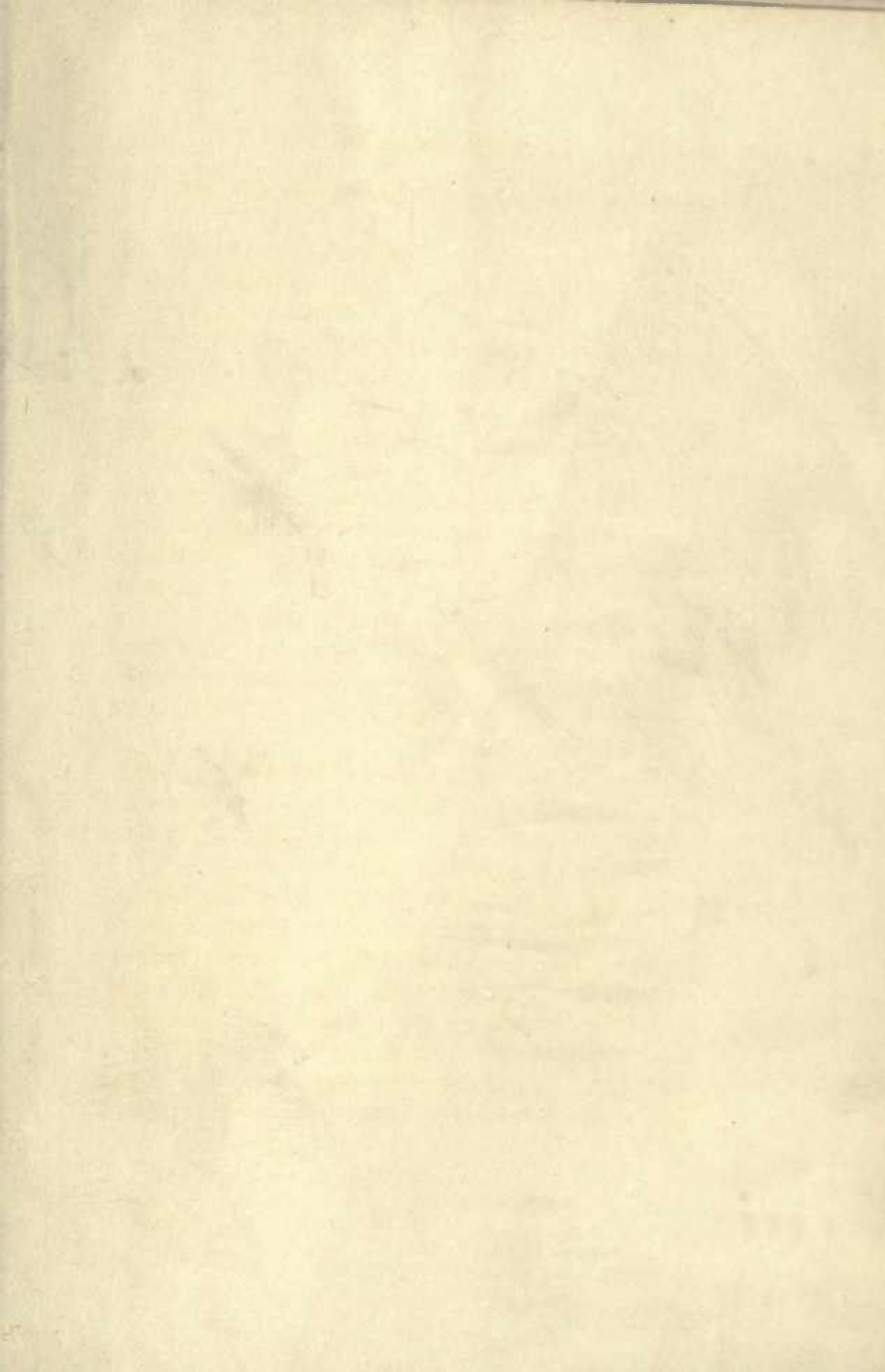
Airy was for returning to the parlor. She liked pomp and ceremony. "No, no," said Bethany, when the Tingsby girl remarked in a stilted voice, "The parlor is more agreeable."

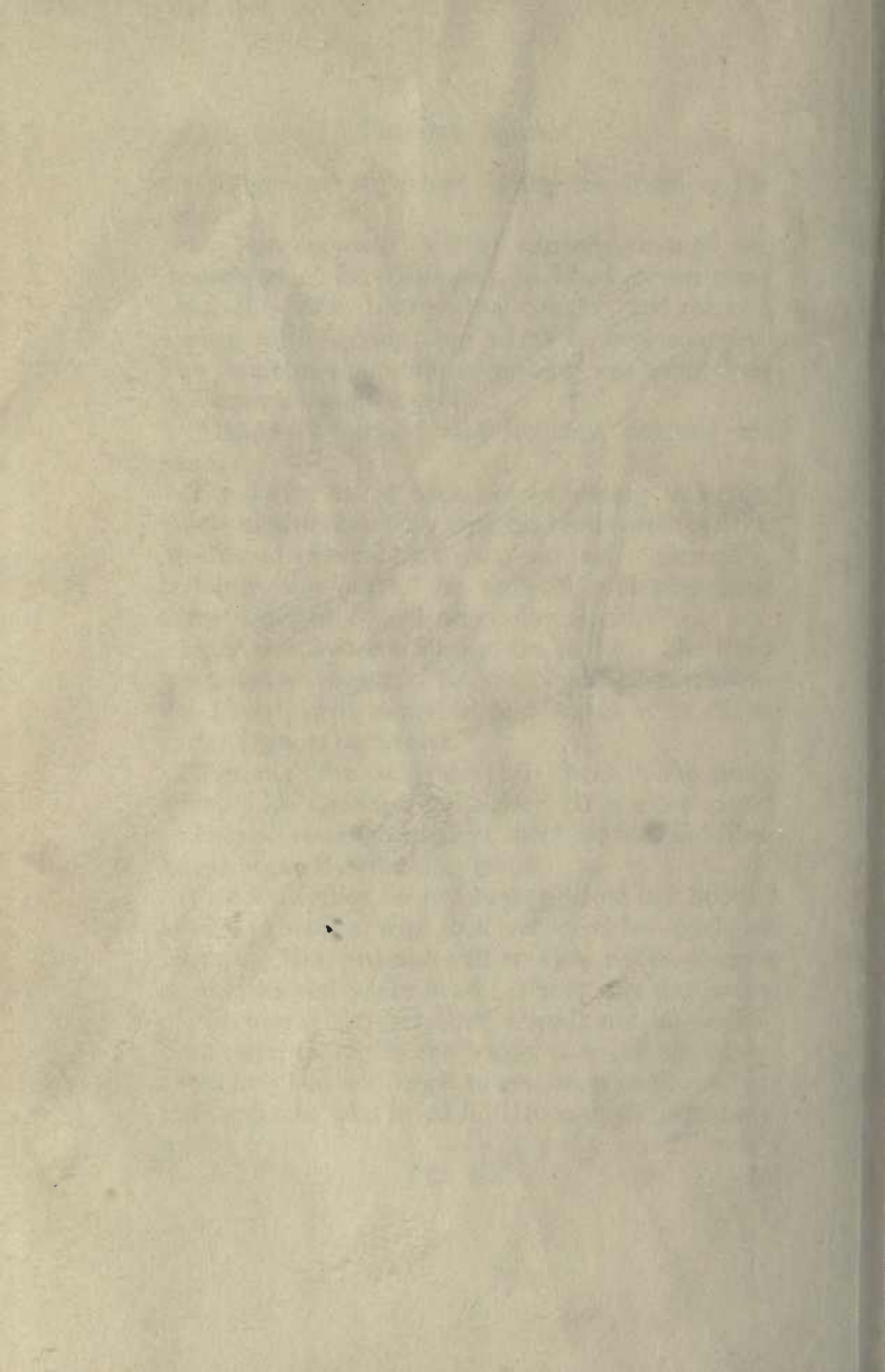
"No, no," the child went on, "here in the study with Daddy Grandpa and Sukey. It is more cozy."

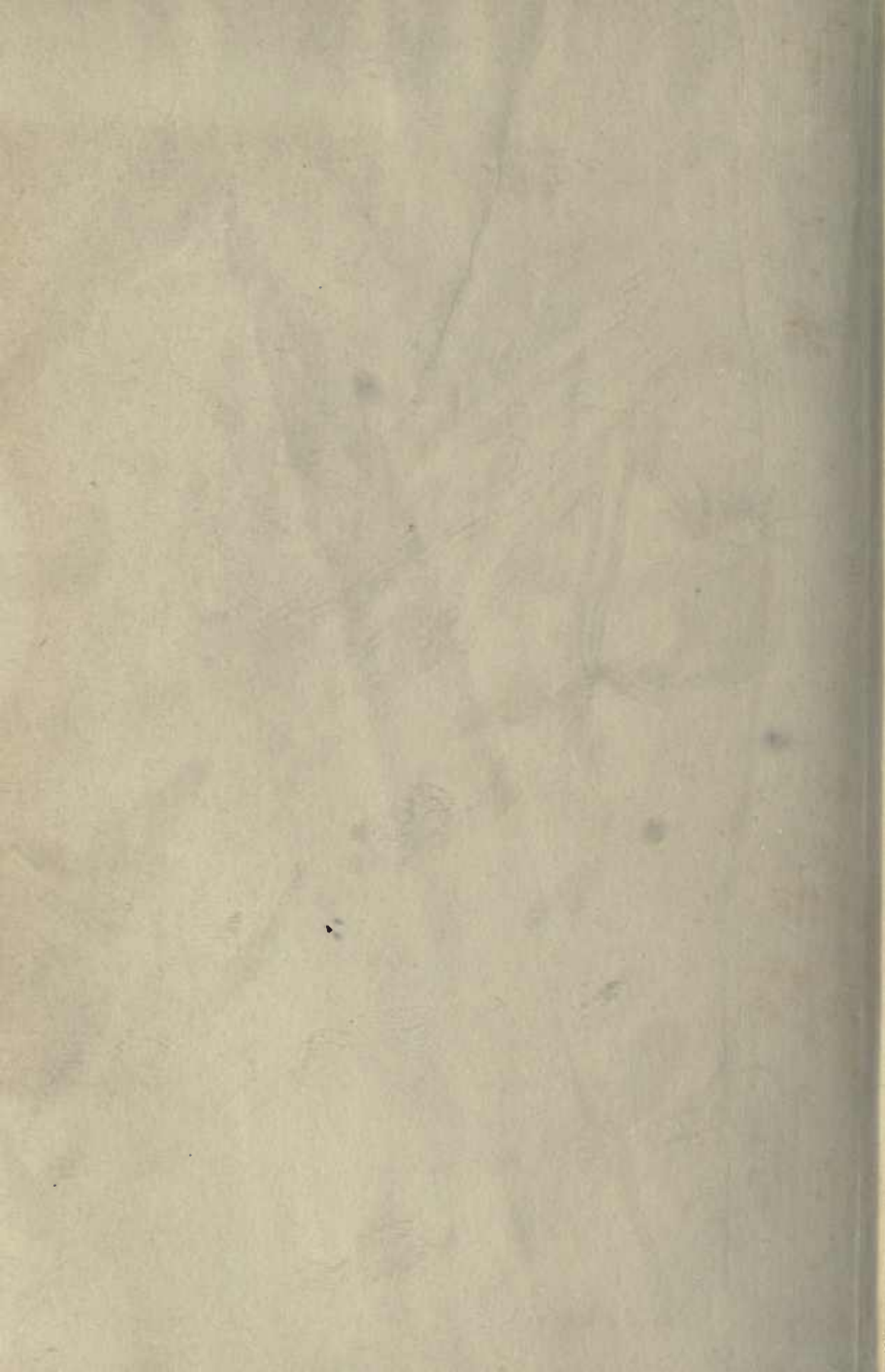
They all seated themselves about the fire, and Mrs. Steele began the guessing game.

Princess Sukey, in her basket, lifted her hooded head and with a wise look surveyed her circle of friends. Her greenish-yellow eyes rested longest on the beloved white head. There was the leader of the family and her chief friend, and his benevolent eyes, taking in the happy faces of the group about him, did not forget to rest occasionally on the little creature who loved him, though she was only a bird.

THE END.







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